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VERY REV.

CHARLES HYACINTH McKENNA

O.P., P.G.

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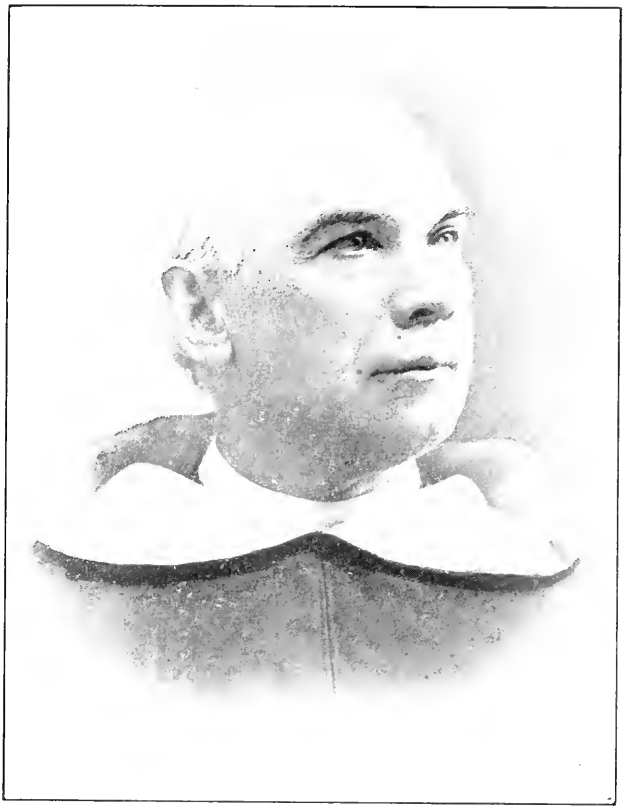

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(1886.)

VERY REV.

CHARLES HYACINTH McKENNA

O.P., P.G.

MISSIONARY AND APOSTLE OF
THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY

BY

VERY REV. V. F. O'DANIEL, O.P., S.T.M.

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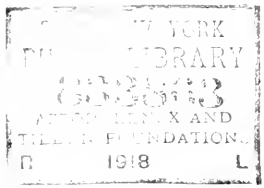
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TO

THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY

AND

THE ROSARY CONFRATERNITY IN THE UNITED STATES

TO WHICH FATHER McKENNA GAVE

MANY OF HIS BEST YEARS

THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

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FOREWORD.

THE life of the Very Rev. Charles Hyacinth McKenna, O.P., which we now give to the public, has been not only a work of love, but one of obedience. It has been a work of love because written under the inspiration of esteem and veneration for the saintly religious—of obedience, for the task was undertaken at the request of the Very Rev. James Raymond Meagher, provincial of the eastern province of Dominicans in the United States, whose high regard for the great missionary and Apostle of the Holy Name caused him to desire to have the memory of so holy a priest preserved for the edification of future generations.

It was a fortunate circumstance that the request to prepare the biography of the distinguished Friar Preacher was received two years prior to his death. For, in this way, time was given in which to collect leisurely much valuable data for our narrative before its subject was called to his reward. Of even greater importance was the opportunity thus afforded of deriving a great part of the information contained in this volume from Father McKenna himself. A man totally devoid of guile, the aged apostle, in the course of numerous conversations and without the least suspicion that he was supplying material for his own life, laid bare his very soul to the writer. But this was no more than he would have done to anyone in whom he trusted. To make the holy man's life-story the more complete and accurate, the assistance of several of his confidential friends, who were in sympathy with the un-

dertaking, was secured in obtaining such first-hand knowledge. When these aids had conversed, by pre-arrangement, with the unsuspecting missioner on the same topics and along the same lines, notes were taken and comparisons made. In every instance it was found that the account given was identical in substance.

Fortunately, also, the writer had not only known Father McKenna long and intimately, but had lived with him for two years. During this time we learned much of his life, as well as made notes on his fruitful labors previous to beginning his biography. Another valuable help in our work were innumerable accounts of Dominican missions collected from papers, both Catholic and secular, from almost every part of the country. These missions were frequent topics of conversation with the zealous harvester of souls during the two years that preceded his death, and proved a fertile means of information regarding his apostolic labors.

Happily, too, the aged missionary, though weak and infirm of body, retained an unimpaired mentality and a ready and retentive memory, and continued to take a keen interest in all matters that concerned the Church and his Order, or that made for the good of souls. Never, perhaps, in all his life was he in better mood for conversation or in better condition for imparting the facts of which we were in search. For these reasons, much of this volume might with truth be termed autobiographical. The remaining portion is either knowledge common to thousands, or which has been derived from Father McKenna's friends and relations or from whatever source that was judged reliable.

To have written a sketch or an appreciation of

Father McKenna, giving merely the broad outlines and touching slightly on the principal events of his life, would have been comparatively an easy task. But to write his biography, which required us to follow him year by year, as he labored through all the country and grew in merit and favor before God and man, was quite another matter. His apostolic career covered nearly half a century, through all of which his activities, though far-reaching and richer in results than the lives of most of God's chosen servants, ran along such unvarying lines that it was impossible to avoid some repetition and sameness of detail. Herein, indeed, lies the writer's greatest apprehension, lest the narrative may at times be found somewhat tedious and tiresome. Yet, to make such a possibility the more remote we have endeavored not to adhere too closely to an account of the great friar's efforts to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Perhaps in places we have been even too meager in the portrayal of his work, that in this way we might avoid repetition. Again, Father McKenna's labors were so entwined with the Dominican missions, the Holy Name Society, the Rosary Confraternity and other sodalities in the United States that it was hard to write his life without at the same time writing their histories. The difficulty of our task was increased by a lack of records and the impossibility of obtaining many letters from the missionary's pen. Father McKenna left few writings to draw upon for his life. But his work was written upon the hearts of the thousands to whom he preached or brought the love of God and peace of soul. Yet extraordinary as were his apostolic activities, they were—after all—subordinate to his inner life.

We would that the telling of the story had fallen into more competent hands. Yet we venture to hope that our biography will not lack in interest, for it reveals the working of grace in the soul of a man over whom the Divine Master seems to have exercised a special providence, although He subjected him to trials not usually found even in the lives of the saints. To young men aspiring to the service of the altar, but deprived of the means of attaining their holy ambition, Father McKenna's life cannot fail to be an inspiration. To Christ's anointed it will ever be a model of every priestly virtue and an exemplar after which to pattern their own lives. To Catholic readers in general it must be a source of edification and of good to their souls.

The saintly Dominican was, above all things, a man of God. In an age when the world is fast drifting towards irreligion, commercialism and the pursuit of pleasure, Father McKenna was raised up by God to be a gleaner of souls, an apostle of piety and an exemplar of the highest Christian ideals. How faithful he proved to the grace that was given to him, as well as how zealously and fruitfully he fulfilled the divine vocation that was bestowed upon him, will, we hope, be revealed in the pages of this volume.

V. F. O'DANIEL, O.P.

THE DOMINICAN COLLEGE,
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA,
WASHINGTON, D. C., July 4, 1917.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTHPLACE AND LINEAGE.

(1835)

MAGHERA, situated in southeastern Derry, or Londonderry, Ireland, and about eight miles west of Lough (or Lake) Beg, is the oldest and one of the quaintest towns in the county. In Ireland's early Christian history it was a place of considerable note. Apart from the historical proofs of the fact, the town bears to this day silent but unmistakable testimony of its great antiquity, its early importance and its prominence as a center of intellectual activity.

Like many of the ancient towns of Ireland, Maghera has in the long course of its existence borne different names at different periods. In early Christian times it was known as Macaire Ratha Luraigh. Doubtless the latter part of the appellation was added in honor of Saint Lurach, the patron saint of the parish.[1] But for many centuries the interesting old place has been called by the simpler name of Maghera.

Maghera's most noted ruins are those of the church of Saint Lurach, which are still in a splendid state of preservation and offer an interesting field of research for the antiquary and archaeologist. They contain features that are quite distinctive and differ much from those of any other early ecclesiastical remains in Ire-

[1] The name is also written Lurac or Lurec, and is often Anglicized Lowry.

land. Portions of them bear evidence of great antiquity. Another interesting historic relic of the old town is the famous well of Saint Lurach, which perpetuates the name of the saint to this day. Legends abound concerning the efficacy of its waters. It is in the heart of the town and was for centuries the principal source of the water supply for its inhabitants.

Although there are no documents to show the date of its foundation, it is generally conceded that Maghera could boast of an abbey of Canons Regular at a very early period. Nor was this all. Late in the sixth or early in the seventh century the see of Ardstrath, or Ardstraw, was transferred from that place to Maghera, and the town was honored with an episcopal seat until 1158, when the bishopric was removed to Derry All this shows the importance of Maghera at the time when Ireland first won its name as the "Island of Saints and Scholars." But with the removal of its bishopric the old town lost its prestige and rapidly declined in population and importance.

More than once during the long period of Ireland's oppression by England the inhabitants of Maghera and the surrounding country showed a commendable spirit of bravery and suffered greatly because of their courage. During late years, through the introduction of modern methods, the town has both improved materially and grown in size. Today it enjoys the reputation of being one of the best market towns in southern Derry.[2]

About two Irish miles west of Maghera is the quaint

[2] This brief history of Maghera is taken largely from conversations with Father McKenna himself. See also "In Ulster Towns and Villages," *The Belfast Weekly Telegraph,* November 8, 1913.

hamlet of Fallalea, famed in local legend or history for the memorable exploit of one Shane Crossagh (cross-eyed John), a noted Irish outlaw. As the story goes, Shane, who was known as the greatest jumper in all Ireland, was surrounded and captured by his English pursuers in the mountains near Fallalea. As a ruse to escape from his captors, he asked to be permitted to show them how much ground he could cover in three leaps. The request was granted. The athlete took a running start, and the third leap carried him beyond the cordon of soldiers. Then, before they could recover from their surprise, thanks to his swiftness of limb and the unevenness of the ground, Shane Crossagh regained his freedom. To this day three piles of stone, one and twenty feet apart, mark the distance of the leaps that gave the outlaw his liberty.

It was at Fallalea that the subject of our narrative, the Very Rev. Charles Hyacinth McKenna, O.P., first saw the light of day, May 8, 1835. He was the eighth of a family of ten children, three of whom (one son and twin daughters) died in their infancy.[3] His parents were Francis McKenna and Anna Gillespie, or rather McDonald; for, as a future page will show, his mother's paternal grandfather, for reasons of prudence, had assumed the name of Gillespie and it was borne by his descendants.

At that period the Catholics of Ireland, although the old faith was overwhelmingly the religion of the people, had not long been permitted to serve God in peace. When religious liberty first began to dawn upon the land, little thatched chapels—for Catholics were not allowed to honor their houses of prayer with the title of church

[3] Their names were Charles, Margaret and Bridget.

—succeeding the dripping cave, the hidden nook or the mountain fastness, rose here and there in country places or small villages rather than in the larger towns and cities. This was particularly the case in the north, where bigotry was most rampant. In this way, while the surrounding neighborhood was known as the parish of Maghera, there was no Catholic church in the town itself—nor is there one today. When the future Dominican was born, Father John McKenna, a relative of the family, was pastor of the chapels of Granahan and Glen, the two churches in the parish of Maghera. That of Glen, which stood about a mile from Fallalea, was attended by the family of Francis McKenna. At his birth the subject of our biography was too sickly to be carried to the chapel to receive the sacrament of baptism. For this reason, Rev. Paul Bradley, the pious curate of the parish, baptized the child on the eighth day, at the McKenna home, giving him the name of Charles, partly in memory of a brother of the same name who had been born a little more than a year before and had lived but a few days—partly in honor of the great cardinal archbishop of Milan, Saint Charles Borromeo.

The McKennas, when we first find trace of them in history, belonged principally to three counties of Ireland—Monaghan, Tyrone and Louth. Those of Monaghan and Tyrone lived along the border between the two counties and were chiefs of Truagh, in Monaghan. So, too, were the McKennas of Louth one of the principal clans in that part of the country. In all three counties they possessed wide areas of land and were among the first families. That they were a peace-loving race, worthy of the motto on the family es-

cutcheon: "Prudence and Honor" (*Prudentia et Honor*), seems certain. For, although they were numerous and strong, seldom does the name of McKenna appear in the annals of the almost perpetual wars to which Ireland was long a prey. That they were staunchly Catholic is shown by the fact that rarely, if ever, does one meet with or hear of a McKenna who is not of the faith of Saint Patrick.

Tradition tells us that early in the eighteenth century a McKenna went with his five sons from Tyrone into Derry, settling near Maghera. In the course of time they came into possession of tenant rights to broad areas of land. Two of the sons lived at Tirkane, two at Fallagloon, and one at Fallalea. Of a prolific race, these five brothers left a numerous progeny in south-eastern Derry. They remained firm in their faith, although surrounded by non-Catholics. In order to keep their religion untarnished, the descendants of the five brothers intermarried to such an extent that a marriage with another than a McKenna, or one of their own blood, was looked upon almost as one contracted out of the Church.

The McKennas of Derry are noted for the number of exemplary and efficient priests they have given to the Church of Ireland. Not many years ago, we are told, one room in a house at Tirkane used to be pointed out as the birthplace of five clergymen. Other countries, it is said, have been scarcely less blessed by priestly scions of this truly Catholic stock. From the house of Fallalea was descended the saintly Dominican of the name, so well known and so deeply venerated in many parts of the United States.

While before her marriage the great missionary's

mother was known as Anna Gillespie, her family name, as has been said, was really McDonald. Quite different from that of the McKennas is the record of the McDonalds in the annals and the history of Ireland. Of a decidedly martial spirit, and one of the strongest and most influential clans of Antrim, they form a conspicuous figure in the history of their home county and the province of Ulster for many centuries. At an early period many of the race passed over from Antrim into Scotland, where they became the most numerous and powerful of the clans in the Scottish Highlands, figuring even more conspicuously in its history than in that of Ireland. Both in Ireland and in Scotland, with some exceptions, they long remained staunch Catholics, and retained the faith under the most trying persecutions.

When, in July, 1745, Prince Charles Stuart, known in history as "The Pretender," landed in Scotland to assert his claim to the thrones of that country and England, large numbers of the Highlanders warmly espoused his cause. Conspicuous among his supporters were the McDonalds or MacDonalds. In Ireland, also, Charles found sympathizers. Among these was one John McDonald of Antrim, the paternal grandfather of Rev. Charles McKenna's mother. With other adherents of the young prince, McDonald went over to Scotland to aid him in sustaining his claims. After the disastrous defeat of the Scottish forces at Culloden, in the April of 1746, McDonald found his way back to Antrim. But to escape arrest he removed to Derry changing his name to Gillespie for prudence sake, and there married and settled near Maghera in the neighborhood of the McKennas. His descendants

retained the assumed name. One of his sons, John Gillespie, or McDonald, was the father of Francis McKenna's wife.[4]

Thus our great Dominican missionary, orator and lecturer belonged to two of Ireland's most prolific and religious families. They were, furthermore, if we may so express it, among the country's most priestly races. Few Celtic names, indeed, are more frequently met with than those of McKenna and McDonald. And although no country in the world, in proportion to its population, is more fruitful in vocations than Ireland, few if any Irish families have given more generously of their sons to the Catholic priesthood than the McKennas and McDonalds. The Catholic directories of 1915, for instance, showed some forty priests whose names were McKenna. Twenty-seven of these belonged to the Church of the United States. The clergymen who bore the patronymic of McDonald, five and thirty of whom served on our missions, were still more numerous.

It is no matter for wonder, therefore, that a scion of two such priestly races should be chosen and educated even from his tenderest years for the service of the altar. Such, indeed, was the case with little Charles McKenna, as far as the limited means of his people permitted.

[4] Father McKenna often told the writer this bit of family history, and said that he thought he was the only member of the family in America acquainted with it.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION.

(1835–1848)

Francis McKenna, the father of little Charles, was a man of some note in his part of Ireland. A prosperous farmer for that day and a devout Catholic, he belonged to that class from which the priesthood of the Emerald Isle was so largely recruited. Open-hearted and generous almost to a fault, his hospitable home was never closed to the weary traveller or the needy stranger. It was a place of rendezvous, where the good man's many friends frequently met to discuss questions that were of interest to their common country and religion. Francis McKenna had been fortunate enough to acquire a fair education for the time. He was possessed of good parts, and read diligently what books he could obtain, while the few newspapers of the day kept him abreast of the period. In this way he acquired a fund of information which made his conversation interesting, and caused him to be regarded as an authority in the circle in which he moved.

Oppression or religious antagonism, it has been said, either causes one to forsake one's faith or makes it grow all the stronger. For this reason, perhaps, we often hear that the Catholics in the north of Ireland are the best in a land where the Catholics are among the staunchest in the world. Possibly the model Catholicity in the household of Francis McKenna may have

been in part due to such an influence. Surrounded on all sides by Orangemen who were then, as they are today, bitterly antagonistic to the faith he professed, the good man was constrained to ground himself thoroughly in the teachings of the Catholic Church that he might successfully defend the religion that was dear to his heart against all attacks. In his preparation for this spiritual warfare he was greatly assisted by Rev. John McKenna, his parish priest, kinsman and friend. Francis McKenna's prowess in the defense of his religion made him respected, if not loved, by those who differed from him in matters of faith.

As Anna Gillespie (or McDonald) was a lady of good mind, of deep religious convictions, and of a temperament akin to that of her husband, their true Christian characters and exemplary Catholic lives combined to make their home a happy one. Both keenly realized that, for those over whom God had placed them, precept without example could hardly be an effective incentive to walk in the path of virtue. For this reason, their first care, next to the fulfillment of their personal duties to God, was to bring up their large family both by word and example to be good practical Catholics.

Things went happily and prosperously with the McKenna household for a few years. The first real sorrow that came upon it was the death of the three little children of whom we have spoken. But in 1837 the model husband and father, Francis McKenna, died in the full vigor of strong manhood, and his remains were laid to rest in the graveyard near the little chapel of Glen.

The death of Francis McKenna, like his life, was that of a true Christian. After nursing his family

through an attack of typhus fever, he himself was stricken with the malady. Although a man of giant frame and robust constitution, his vigils and labors had so sapped his strength that he fell a victim to the disease within a few days. We may well imagine the anguish of the widow's heart when she saw herself bereft of her beloved companion and her children deprived of their father just when they most needed his guiding hand and provident care. As the prospects of the young family were bright, the blow was all the more severe because unexpected. Yet, like a second Esther, Mrs. McKenna found courage in the thought that God's aid is ever with those who love and trust in Him.[1] Like another mother of the Maccabees, the good woman determined to bring up her seven children for God, to whom she was ready to give them all.[2] The belief that God chastises those He loves tempered her grief with consolation.

The friends of the husband proved friends in need to the desolate widow, giving her every care and assistance. But in the work of bringing up and educating her young family, the eldest of whom was but ten or eleven years of age at the death of her husband, none proved so truly helpful as her zealous kinsman, Rev. John McKenna. He was her adviser in all things, particularly in those that regarded the welfare, spiritual and temporal, of her children. With Father McKenna, as with the family, little Charles, the youngest of the seven, appears to have been the favorite.

Charles McKenna was but two years of age at the

[1] *Esther,* chapters XIV and XV.
[2] *Second Maccabees,* chapter VII.

time of his father's death. While by no means opulent, his mother had been left in easy circumstances, and, like the brave woman of Scripture (Proverbs, chapter 31), she set herself to the task of caring for her fatherless children. Her first aim, of course, was to bring them up good Catholics. Like most Irish mothers, she cherished the hope of seeing at least one of her sons give himself to the Church. Her choice in this matter was little Charles, whose disposition won him the friendship of all, and whose early piety foreshadowed his high vocation. One of the boy's greatest delights was to go to church; another was to study his catechism. It was the custom of the family, as in many homes of Catholic Ireland, to recite the Rosary every evening. This was Charles' favorite prayer. He called it the "joint prayer" because the whole household was always assembled for its recitation. Naturally, the Christian instinct of the good Irish mother caused her to take notice of these signs of piety in her youngest child. She felt that they were indications of a call to the priesthood which she should foster. Accordingly, little Charles McKenna was the object of his pious mother's special care and solicitude.

Such was the Catholic atmosphere of the McKenna household; such the maternal care with which the future priest's budding vocation was nurtured. Of both the great missionary and preacher retained fondest remembrances until the end of his long life. Very probably, indeed, had the forces that shaped his early life been less strongly spiritual, he would never have had the courage necessary to overcome the obstacles that later seemed hopelessly to close to him the door of the priesthood.

One of Charles' earliest recollections shows him to have been endowed even then with an extraordinary memory—a faculty that stood him in good stead through all his long and useful life. The night of the "Little Christmas," or the fifth of January, 1839, is historic wherever the Irish have found a footing since that date; and this is nearly everywhere. It was the "Night of the Big Wind" which caused such great loss of life and property through nearly all the Emerald Isle, and made the people believe the end of the world had come. As every one at all acquainted with modern Irish history knows, the "Night of the Big Wind" long served as a sort of chronological index in domestic traditions. In the boyhood days of Charles McKenna, and for long years afterwards, the people of Ireland reckoned the dates of births and events from the "Big Wind," as the ancient Greeks used to reckon history from the Olympic games, or the Romans from the foundation of their city. Although Charles McKenna was not quite four years of age when this extraordinary phenomenon occurred, he retained a vivid recollection of it until the day of his death. He used to say that he could never forget the awful roar of the wind, the great fear that it caused him, the alarm in the faces of his mother and the family, or the sight of the fallen trees that lay strewn about the yard the next morning.

No race of people is blessed with a readier or more retentive memory than the Irish. No nation is fonder of its folk-lore, its music and poetry, its heroes, the glories of its great past, and above all of its religion. All these are subjects which in the dark days of persecution were recounted and discussed with love and en-

thusiasm at every Irish fireside during the long winter evenings. The hospitable home of the McKennas was no exception to this custom. A subject on which Father Charles H. McKenna ever loved to dwell was how, in his childhood days, he was wont to sit at the side of his beloved mother before the blazing peat fire and listen while their visitors discoursed on Ireland's glorious past, her saints, the missionaries whom she had sent to foreign lands, her great men and orators. The older people of that generation had known Burke, Emmet, Flood, Grattan and Tone. The deeds or speeches of these and others were still fresh in the memory of Ireland, and were often the subject of keen discussion in the warm glow of the McKenna hearth. The name of O'Connell, Ireland's living hero, was on every tongue. Of all the visitors to the family the most welcome to little Charles was Father John McKenna, whose every word he listened to with rapt attention. Besides being a priest, and as such deeply reverenced by his youthful kinsman, Father McKenna was the best informed and the wittiest of the many guests.[3] But, while interested in all the topics rehearsed, those that especially appealed to the future Dominican were his country's orators and missionaries. In this way was his receptive mind inflamed with the desire to become a great pulpit orator or a missionary in some foreign land.

It was in such an atmosphere of history, heroism and religion that the young soul of Charles McKenna received its earliest intellectual impressions. As a

[3] In the death of Rev. John McKenna, which occurred when Charles was nine or ten years of age, the subject of our narrative lost a true friend from whom he might have expected much aid in the attainment of his heart's keenest desire.

priest he used to say that the knowledge he then obtained at his mother's fireside was a source of much strength and courage for him, when in later years misfortune crossed his path, long preventing the attainment of the object uppermost in his mind. Until the close of his life he loved to recite snatches of Celtic poetry and fragments from speeches of great Irish orators that he had thus learned in his early youth.

Though the blight of misrule still darkened Ireland with the pall of much illiteracy, the parents of Charles McKenna had been fortunate enough to receive a fair education. From his mother the docile boy received his first lessons in worldly wisdom, as in Christian doctrine. But we soon find the youth accompanying his brothers and sisters to the little national school near the Glen chapel, where his first preceptor was one Master O'Loan.

Our young schoolboy, while not robust, was large of build and tall beyond his years, an indication of the splendid type of physical manhood that he was to become in his mature years. His head was unusually large, his brow high and broad—signs of mental superiority.[4] Fond of stories, quick at repartee, ready of wit, and fairly keen for the national sports—as those of his race usually are—he was withal of a quiet, retiring and meditative disposition. He seems to have been somewhat slow in his mental development, as often happens with those who have grown rapidly; for in those early student days there was nothing, as far as the author has been able to ascertain, to show that Charles McKenna was possessed of talents much above

[4] Because of the size of his head, Father McKenna was obliged to have his hats made to order.

the ordinary, or to suggest those latent oratorical powers that were one day to hold vast audiences spell-bound.

Apart from his great purity of life, earnestness and exemplary conduct, young McKenna's greatest claim to merit in those early days lay in his religious temperament and an extraordinary love for reading which he retained all the days of his long life. But the books of which he was particularly fond were those of a devotional or religious character, especially the lives of the saints and noted ecclesiastics. Of such books there were a number in his mother's house, for his parents were given to similar reading. Among them were several volumes of Rev. Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints,* all of which he had read and re-read before attaining his eleventh year.

The pious youth had associated with him in his spiritual reading a few boys of the neighborhood of his own age and inclinations. The lives of the hermits of the desert appealed to their devotion, inspiring them with a desire to imitate them. Indeed, in their boyish fancy they went so far as to plan a hermitage in the Highlands of Scotland, where, free from the distractions of the world, they could spend their lives in solitude, prayer and communion with God. Another plan conceived by these pious youths was to form a society for the promotion of more frequent attendance at mass, for the care of churches, and for the enhancement of religious worship.

This incessant reading of pious books and the lives of the saints or noted ecclesiastics, which he began in early youth and continued until the end of his life, made Father McKenna one of the best informed

hagiologists the writer has ever known. To it also was largely due the wide accurate knowledge of church history that he possessed.

The Bible, particularly the New Testament which he read over and over, was another of little Charles' favorite books. It was from his good Christian mother that he learned to love the Scriptures. Like her husband, Mrs. McKenna was well grounded in the letter, at least, of the New Law. To prepare her children to meet the arguments of their non-Catholic neighbors —a very necessary thing in the north of Ireland—that pious lady was not content merely to instruct them in the doctrine of the Church, but taught them and made them study the Inspired Word. Much of it they had to commit to memory. No Sunday was allowed to pass without at least an hour devoted to public reading of the Sacred Text. At this holy exercise every member of the household was obliged to be present. The youngest boy, it was soon noticed, had an extraordinary devotion to the Word of God that caused him to make rapid progress in its knowledge. This familiar acquaintance with the letter of the Scriptures served Charles McKenna well when, as a Dominican novice, he began the study of theology. It was invaluable to him when, as a priest, he entered on those arduous labors of a missioner and preacher through which he is principally known to the world.

From his earliest youth there had been instilled into the mind of the boy the idea that he was to become a priest. That he was to be one he took for granted; but he had not given even a thought as to whether he would enter the ranks of the diocesan clergy or become a member of some religious order. Perhaps, indeed,

he did not know at this early period of his life that there was such a distinction of clergymen. As there were no Dominicans in his part of Ireland, he had probably never seen a member of the Order; certainly never one dressed in its distinctive garb.[5] But one day, when he was not more than eleven years of age, as he was poring over the pages of an illustrated work of the character that appealed so forcibly to his piety, little Charles chanced upon a woodcut of Saint Thomas Aquinas. It was the well-known picture of the Angelic Doctor which represents him on his knees before the crucifix, rapt in prayer, with rays of light encircling his brow. The image in white and black appealed to the youth's pious fancy, and he ran to show it to his mother. The earnest little fellow then read the sketch of the great Dominican's life that he found in the book. Then and there Charles McKenna, young as he was, resolved that some day he too would be a member of the Order established by the holy man of Caleruega, and wear the religious habit worn by the Angelic Doctor. Whether this was an inspiration from heaven, or whether subsequent events but show the boy's marvelous tenacity of purpose, we cannot say; but we have it on the undoubted word of the great missionary himself that, in spite of the many and extraordinary difficulties that he had to surmount, he never faltered in this resolution until the attainment of its object some fifteen years later.

Because of her prudence and skill in the manage-

[5] During the penal days for the fathers to wear the habit of their Order in Ireland was to court death. And because of the rampant prejudice of the Orangemen, the Dominicans continued, whenever they went into the north of the island, to wear the black cassock of the secular priests until after Charles McKenna came to America.

ment of her domestic affairs after the death of her husband, brave Widow McKenna was known among her neighbors as a "woman with a man's head." With the aid of servants and her children she tilled the little farm at Fallalea, and spun and wove flax. That part of the produce of the land or the work of her deft fingers which was not necessary for household use, she sent to the markets of Maghera or Coleraine. Under her wise care matters went along prosperously enough for some years. Through economy the tender mother hoped to give all her children an education suitable to their state in life; but upon Charles, for the reason given, she intended to bestow all the advantages required to fit him for the sublime calling that she prayed might be his. When he had completed his primary course at Glen, he was sent to the higher national school at Tirkane, about one and one-half miles on the other side of the McKenna home. At Tirkane his first preceptor was one Isaac Bradley. The walk to and from school in the mornings and evenings, he used to say, caused him but one inconvenience, that of giving him a big appetite.

Days of hardship and privation were now to come upon the McKenna household—days destined to run into years and to try the very soul of Charles. Year after year the crops failed on the little farm at Fallalea. Particularly trying was the great famine that followed the almost total failure of the potato crops of 1846 and 1847. Because of the pall of misery and despair that hung over the land in consequence of the hard times, business came to a standstill, and the flax industry, on which the family principally depended, ceased to be profitable. Through this series of mis-

fortunes, not only did the small competency that had been accumulated and that was to be used, at least in part, for the education of Charles, gradually disappear, but the McKennas were brought to the verge of distress.

Charles Gillespie, a brother of Mrs. McKenna, had already come to the United States, settling in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he engaged in business. Because of the gloomy outlook in his native land, Gillespie urged his sister to dispose of her holdings in Ireland and to bring her young family to Lancaster. Like many of the Irish of that day, the good woman under the stress of the hard times had herself begun to look to some foreign land for relief. Accordingly, she determined to join her brother in Pennsylvania. But as a measure of prudence she insisted that John, her eldest son, should remain at home to occupy the farm until the outcome of the American enterprise should be tested. If it proved a success, she said, then they could sell their tenant rights and all could come to America. If, on the contrary, it resulted in failure, they would still have a fireside to return to in Ireland. To this arrangement, however, John McKenna declined to agree unless Charles, his youngest brother, were left with him at the old homestead of Fallalea. While this separation was trying in the last degree to her maternal heart, the fond mother reluctantly consented to the sacrifice. But her sorrow was not without its ray of consolation; for she knew that the future missionary would be able to continue at Tirkane the schooling of which she feared he might be deprived in America. This stipulation, in fact, she made with her eldest son before leaving her home in the Old World to seek another in the New.

It was in August, 1848, when all Ireland was still in the throes of the great famine that followed the fatal potato blights of the two preceding years, that good Mrs. McKenna, with two of her sons (Alexander and Neil) and her three daughters (Catherine, Mary and Matilda), sailed from Londonderry for the United States. The pain of parting from John and Charles may be imagined. As the grand old priest used to express it: "It had all the sorrow and anguish experienced at the breaking up of a beloved home added to that of a first separation in a united and affectionate family."

CHAPTER III.

LAST YEARS IN IRELAND AND FIRST IN AMERICA.

(1848–1859)

In those days of the sailing immigrant vessel a voyage across the Atlantic was far different from that of today. The accommodations furnished to steerage passengers on our modern floating palaces are luxurious by comparison with the best afforded at the period of which we speak. The immigrants in the middle of the last century had not only to bring their own food supplies and cooking utensils with them, but were obliged to prepare their meals on a common stove belonging to the vessel. When, as oftentimes happened, the tossing and rolling of the ship made such domestic labors impossible, they had to be content with the poorest and most unpalatable fare. The voyage of Mrs. McKenna is said to have been uncommonly rough. Most of the passengers were sick during the greater part of the time. Thus we can fancy the trials of the good mother and her five children on their stormy passage across the Atlantic nearly three-score and ten years ago.

After a journey of seven weeks our travellers arrived in Philadelphia, and without delay hurried on to the home of Charles Gillespie at Lancaster. As the younger members of the family soon procured employment, it was not long before the McKennas had an humble but comfortable home in America, over

which the Christian mother presided with the same scrupulous religious care that had characterized her ministrations in the old home in Fallalea.

Back in Ireland John and Charles McKenna lived a lonely life on the old homestead. The elder brother labored on the little farm, spinning and weaving flax during the long winter evenings or at odd times when labor in the fields was slack. The younger, in fulfillment of the mother's wish, attended the national school at Tirkane, but gave his brother a helping hand during the summer vacations. Occasionally, indeed, in the busy seasons the boy was obliged to remain away from school for days at a time. In this way, although he sought to repair such setbacks by extra application and private reading, his progress in his studies was somewhat retarded. One thing, however, neither of the brothers ever neglected—fidelity to their religious duties. By their neighbors they were regarded as the model Catholic young men of the parish of Maghera.

While he loved John, whose good qualities he had learned to admire, the separation from his mother and the rest of the family was a heavy cross for Charles McKenna. Besides, the hope of obtaining a classical education in Ireland became daily more and more remote. In his youthful enthusiasm he believed this would be more easily acquired in America. For this reason, he repeatedly importuned his brother to consent to his emigrating to the United States, and often wrote his mother for permission to join her. Three years passed, however, before the future missioner's desire was granted. At length he sailed from Londonderry on the boat "Superior," arriving in Philadelphia

in the August of 1851. His voyage, like that of his mother, was stormy and lasted seven weeks. In the City of Brotherly Love, which at a later day was to be the scene of some of his greatest missionary triumphs, the young immigrant, before continuing his journey, tarried for a few days to visit relations. At Lancaster, no doubt, though for reasons quite different, the meeting of mother and son was not less touching than had been their separation at Fallalea just three years before.

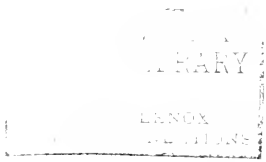
The future Friar Preacher was sixteen years of age when he arrived in the young American republic. The picture of Saint Thomas of Aquin still haunted his memory; the desire one day to wear the saint's white frock and black mantle and to become a member of the Order to which the Angelic Doctor belonged still held sway in his heart. In this the mother was of one mind with the son. But, although he had made considerable progress in his studies, Charles McKenna did not deem himself prepared to seek admission into the novitiate.

As the family was still poor and unable to pay his way through college, Charles was now sent to the public school at Lancaster. There the innocent Irish youth was the victim of many practical jokes played on him by his mischievous American companions. But his Celtic wit soon made him a match for the cleverest of them, while his good nature disarmed all opposition. A source of much merriment to his schoolfellows, as well as of embarrassment to himself, was his pronounced Irish brogue. To overcome this, as he felt he must, was no easy matter. Yet how completely he succeeded in this self-imposed task through patient,

persistent effort, those of our readers who have held converse with the great priest or listened to his eloquent sermons or lectures well know.

At the earnest solicitation of the father of the American hierarchy, the Most Rev. John Carroll, the Dominicans in the United States—of whose province the young Irishman now eagerly desired to become a member—had settled west of the Allegheny Mountains, making their first foundation and laying the corner-stone of their first province in central Kentucky. This was in 1806. From Kentucky the activities of the fathers had gradually spread through Ohio, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and into distant California. But it was not until early 1853, nearly a year and a half after the subject of our biography had settled in Pennsylvania, that they obtained a permanent footing in the east. This was in the National Capital. But of this new foundation the eager candidate knew not. Nor did he know that the fathers had a college attached to Saint Joseph's Priory near Somerset, Ohio, where, because of the scarcity of vocations at that period, a young man of his promise and deeply religious character would have been gladly received and educated for the priesthood without charge.

Thus, convinced that he must perforce earn by the sweat of his own brow the means necessary to pay the expenses of a college education before he could hope to realize the ambition of his life, Charles McKenna soon began to seek employment. That of a tradesman, he felt, promised quicker returns. Accordingly, we find him, after the school term of 1853, taking up the life of a common laborer. At first he worked in the cotton mills of his home town, but in the course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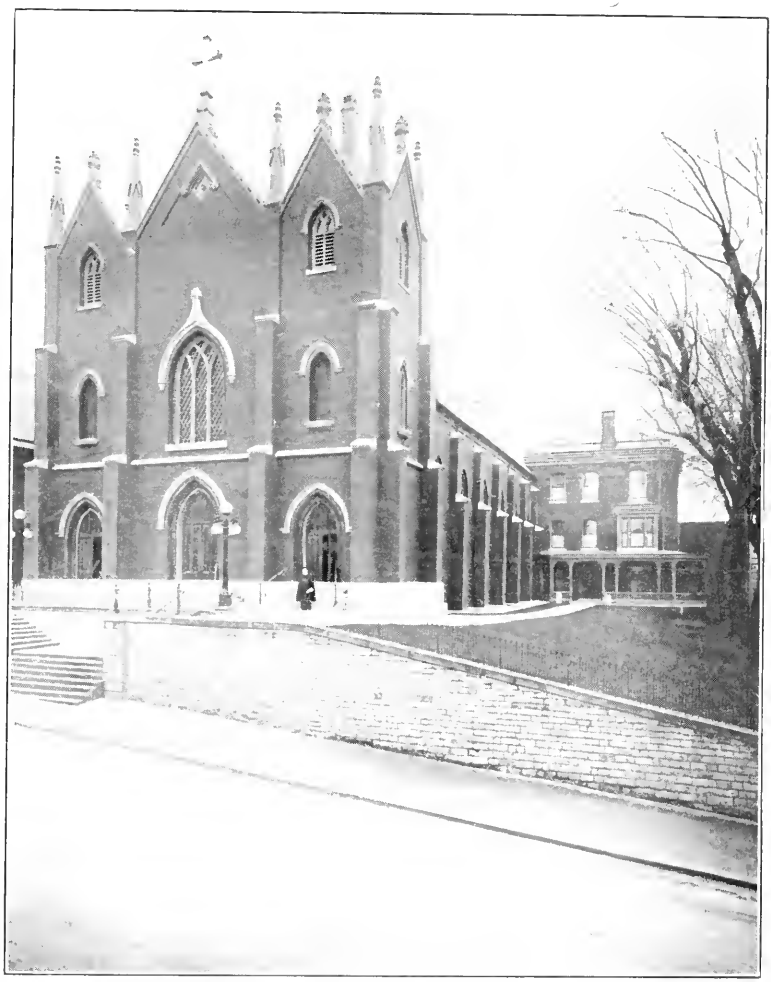

SAINT MARY'S CHURCH, LANCASTER, PA., ON WHICH CHARLES McKENNA DID HIS FIRST WORK AS A STONECUTTER.

of a very few months he gave up this occupation to learn the trade of stonecutter under his brother Alexander, who was in the employment of the firm of Konigmacher and McCormack.

For four years Charles McKenna worked assiduously at his trade in and around Lancaster. While there he was employed in dressing the stonework for the city's courthouse and for old Saint Mary's Church, of which Rev. Bernard Keenan was then pastor. Just after Charles had quit school, Mrs. McKenna had gone to Father Keenan to consult him about her son's ardent desire to become a priest. But the good clergyman, doubtless deceived by the young man's appearance, assured the anxious mother that her boy would not live "to turn a gray hair." It must, therefore, have been with some feelings of laudable pride and triumph that, some twenty odd years later, the zealous friar returned to the church in which his family had worshipped, and which he had helped to build with his own hands, to electrify the people with his eloquent oratory.

At times, when work at his trade was slack, as often happened, the young artisan turned his deft hands to any labor of which he was capable. No honest employment, however menial, was beneath his notice, so anxious was he to gain the means to continue his education. Thus we find him, about 1856, laboring for a while as a mason on the conduit then in course of construction to bring the water supply of the city of Washington from the Great Falls on the Potomac.

His earnings, at times meager enough, the industrious young man entrusted to his mother that she might save from them for the purpose ever before his

mind whatever was not necessary for the support of the household; for desirous as he was to begin his studies for the priesthood, he insisted on contributing his part towards the maintenance of the common home. As the family was still poor and charged with the care of an invalid sister, he felt it a matter of justice that he should bear his portion of this burden. Days, indeed, were those of trial and hardship; days in which but little sunshine came into his life. But they were trials of the soul rather than of the body. In the McKenna household, both in Ireland and in America, religion played a conspicuous part. There vice, irreligion, swearing, or even coarse language dared not intrude. The world unregenerate, with its ways of sin and profligacy, was unknown to Charles McKenna's innocent mind until through sheer necessity and from the highest motives he entered its arena to battle for the means of gaining his great end. But it was now to bare itself in all its shocking vulgarity before his astonished eyes and to pierce his very soul with sorrow. Time and again has the writer heard the good priest tell how he was often pained by the scandalous lives, the foul language, the blasphemous oaths of many of the men with whom he labored during the years he was a stonecutter; how, when pay day came, he and his brother Alexander were often the only ones who returned sober to their homes.

Nor was this all. The brave man had also to contend with the national bias and religious prejudice which was then so prevalent. The wave of Know-nothingism that spread over the country like a conflagration in the last century, occasioning many outrages, began in 1852, the year after Charles McKenna's ar-

rival in America, and attained its height in 1854, the year after he began the life of a day-laborer. The two principal objects of the hatred of that un-American and un-Christian party were the Catholic Church and the Irish immigrant. One of the strongholds of the party was Philadelphia, some seventy miles from Lancaster, where our young artisan was employed. Charles and Alexander McKenna suffered much humiliation and many indignities from those of their fellow laborers who were imbued with the Know-nothing spirit.

During those four trying years of his life our future missioner had one purpose ever in view—to gain the necessary means for an education preparatory to entering the Order of Saint Dominic. To attain this end he was prepared, as the author has often heard him declare, "to go through fire and water." It was, in fact, largely from this ardent desire that the pious workman derived the patience and fortitude that sustained him in the oftentimes unpleasant companionship of his fellow stonecutters and in the still more severe ordeal to which he was to be subjected by his foreman in the west. Another source of strength to his great soul in these trials was his spirit of prayer, a characteristic of his entire life. Indeed, the habit of prayer and staunch devotion to his ruling ideal form the keynote of Charles McKenna's character at this crucial period.

In Ireland the young man had acquired a good rudimentary education in the three R's, and had made some progress in the Latin tongue. To this he had added considerably during the two years spent in the public school at Lancaster. In spite of his hard

labors during the four years of his life as a common workman in the east, he found much time for study, for reviewing what he had learned at school, and for reading. In addition to preparation for the priesthood, he found in books food for his hungry mind and companionship for his lonely hours. Few were the nights suffered to pass without some hours devoted to serious reading, while a great part of each Sunday and all the intervals when there was no work were conscientiously given to this means of self-advancement. Towards the end of this period he gave particular attention to Latin. By his tireless industry the future priest not only acquired a fair stock of solid and useful information, but planted the germ of a mental life that was destined to have a large and vigorous growth.

Charles McKenna had by this time developed into a man of splendid physique, and his bearing was such as to impress one with the idea that, given the chance, he was destined to make his mark in the world. He dressed neatly and associated with the honest middle class, carefully avoiding, except when at work, those of vulgar instincts. All this, together with his good manners and air of refinement—for he was ever the gentleman—gained him many friends and a social consideration that is not ordinarily accorded day-laborers. His good judgment, honesty, industry and sobriety won him the confidence of all with whom he came into contact—so much so, indeed, that shortly before he went west, a prominent merchant of Lancaster made him a flattering offer to become a partner in a lucrative business. This offer, however, the pious man declined, lest it should interfere with his vocation and with the arrangements he had made for his aged mother and invalid sister, when he should leave them.

Wherever he labored, or whatever the difficulties thrown in his way, the young Irishman never forgot his religion or his duties as a Christian. By those of his faith he was regarded not merely as a model Catholic, but as truly a man of God. Both in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and in Dubuque, Iowa, he was a member of the church sodalities and a teacher in the Sunday school. When at home, he was never known to be absent from either of these posts of duty.

In the meantime Mary McKenna, the second sister, had married one John Cassidy who moved to the Bankston Settlement, an Irish Catholic colony in Iowa, where the husband purchased a farm about twelve miles west of Dubuque. Through Cassidy the future missioner learned that he could find in the capital of Iowa more constant employment at his trade and obtain higher wages than he was receiving in the east. Cassidy also offered the aged Mrs. McKenna and the invalid daughter a home with his family, in case Alexander and Charles availed themselves of this opportunity. For this reason, the two brothers left for Iowa in 1857. Their mother and sister, whom they took with them, they placed in the Cassidy home, while they went to live in the city of Dubuque.[1]

In the growing west, while his wages were higher, the young artisan's lot was in some respects less happy

1 Descendants of John and Mary (McKenna) Cassidy still live in Iowa and Minnesota, while one of their daughters, Sister Stephana, O.S.D., is a nun at Saint Catherine's Academy, Springfield, Kentucky. Matilda, the missionary's youngest sister, regained her health and married James McClure, of the Bankston Settlement, but had no children. Catherine, the eldest sister, married Roger Dougherty and remained in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where two of their children, Francis and Mary, still live. None of the boys married. Neil McKenna died in Iowa, while Alexander returned later to Lancaster, where he remained until his death. John came to America when an old man and died in the east.

than it had been in Pennsylvania. The foreman under whom he labored was of Scottish Presbyterian descent and deeply imbued with the principles of Know-nothingism. Charles and Alexander McKenna, consequently, were objects of his special dislike. Everything that went wrong he sought to lay at their door; no work was misdone for which he did not blame them; nothing they could do with which he did not find fault. No manner of injustice, trickery or persecution, in fine, was left untried by the unscrupulous foreman, who suffered his fanaticism to descend even to ruffianism, that he might deprive the brothers of their employment. But the fellow understood not the mettle of the two men. Quiet and peaceful withal, they had a will that refused to cringe under the cruelties of their persecutor. They soon learned, too, that their common employer appreciated their skilled labor, honesty and sobriety, and that their enemy's mad efforts but turned to his own confusion.

An incident of interest in Charles McKenna's relations with his western foreman deserves to be recorded as an index to his character. When the wily bigot learned that Charles was saving his earnings to educate himself for the priesthood, the man's wrath knew no bounds. He now determined to discharge the Irish stonecutter at any cost, and to accomplish his nefarious purpose with some show of justice before their common employer, he resorted to an infamous trick. Two stones were needed of the same shape and dimensions. For this work a friend of the foreman and Charles McKenna were selected. To the former was given a stone both smoother and smaller; while the future missionary was shown a block much larger and rougher, with the remark that unless his work was

done as skillfully and finished as quickly as that of his rival, his services would no longer be required. The task seemed an impossible one, but, like Michael Angelo with his statue of Moses, the pious craftsman set to it with determination, while his *Aves* and *Paters* ran apace with the strokes of his hammer. His long, muscular arm put such force into his blows that the rough mass of stone rapidly decreased in size and assumed the desired shape. Not only to the mortification of the foreman, but to his own great surprise, McKenna's work was done more skillfully than that of his competitor, and was completed in less time. The holy priest of after years often referred to this incident as an illustration of the power of prayer, for he firmly believed that he had been given special help from on high.

In the growing west the industrious artisan found fairly constant and lucrative employment. The work done by him on several public buildings—notably the custom-house at Dubuque and the courthouse at Saint Louis—brought him substantial returns. Thus, in spite of his trials, the good man's spirits were buoyant because he foresaw that he would soon have the means to realize the purpose for which he had striven so long and so diligently. He rejoiced that his struggle with the world would soon come to an end. He continued his habit of reading. That he might advance himself the more rapidly, he burnt more midnight oil than ever over his studies.[2]

[2] Among the writer's earliest recollections as a Dominican is the story of Father McKenna's heroic efforts to prepare himself for admission into the same Order. Humble as he was, the holy priest seemed to think it something of a duty to tell the students the part of his life recorded in the present chapter, that he might thus urge them to put their best endeavors into their studies, and at the same time encourage and strengthen them in their labors.

In after years the zealous priest was often tempted to regret the long days he spent as a common laborer as a period lost from his life. But while this may be true in one sense, in another it is certain that, to say nothing of the courage and consolation with which it may inspire many a young man similarly situated, this part of his notable career was rich in experiences that served him well in later years. Then it was that he learned from the most tangible evidence the necessity of an ambassador of Christ laboring among men. Accordingly, he resolved that, should he ever attain to the priesthood, his ministrations should be devoted to them rather than to those of the gentler and more pious sex. How faithfully he kept this resolve and how fruitfully he labored for the spiritual betterment of Catholic men through many parts of the United States, is a matter of no uncertain history.

While in Dubuque Charles McKenna's desire to become a Friar Preacher was strengthened by the renown of Father Samuel C. Mazzuchelli, O.P., whose name was there spoken almost with reverence, and whose missionary zeal and labors and achievements as an architect and church builder were then, as they are to this day, the frequent topic of conversation among both Catholics and non-Catholics. There also the perseverant candidate for the Order was nearer to a Dominican convent—Sinsinawa Mound—than he had ever been in his life; yet strange to say, he was not to see the institution for nearly two years. This was because he now clearly foresaw that he would soon have the means to attend the college attached to it, and he did not wish to visit the place until he was ready to make application for admittance.

CHAPTER IV.

COLLEGE DAYS AND NOVITIATE.

(1859–1863)

THE Dominican college of Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin, was founded in 1846 by the saintly Father Samuel C. Mazzuchelli, O.P. Thirteen years of apostolic life among the Indians and on the missions through Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa had convinced the zealous priest that a second province of the Dominican Order in our American republic, with its center in the growing northwest country, would hasten the development of the Church in those parts. Like Father Edward D. Fenwick and the other co-founders of the first province of Friars Preacher in the United States, Father Mazzuchelli believed that a Catholic college would be not merely a blessing to the Catholic youth of the northwest, but the most effectual means of building up and securing vocations for the new province which he proposed to establish there, and which he hoped to see become a fruitful center of missionary endeavor.

Accordingly, in June, 1843, with the knowledge and consent of his superiors and the ordinary of Dubuque, then the only bishop in the northwest, he sailed for Europe on this mission. As Father Mazzuchelli's reputation as an apostolic priest, an exemplary religious and a man of sound judgment had preceded him to the Eternal City, the consent of the Most Rev.

Angelus Ancarani, the Master General of the Order at that time, and that of the Propaganda were readily given to both enterprises. At first it was intended that the foundation should be made at Galena, Illinois. But a change from this place caused a delay. Thus it was not until two years later that the plan took definite shape in the opening of Saint Dominic's Church and Monastery in southwestern Wisconsin. The college followed in 1846. The new province was called the Province of Saint Charles, after Father Mazzuchelli's patron saint; while the educational institution was known as Sinsinawa Mound College, from the name of the prominent hill at the base of which it stood.

Because of the lack of vocations in the new and undeveloped country and the impossibility of obtaining a sufficient number of members of his Order from abroad, the Province of Saint Charles, at the request of its founder, was fused into that of Saint Joseph in 1849; and in the fall of the same year Father Joseph T. Jarboe was appointed president of the college, Father Mazzuchelli desiring to devote himself exclusively to the work of the missions. Under Father Jarboe's administration the Sinsinawa Mound College, the times considered, had gone along prosperously for ten years when it opened its doors to its most illustrious alumnus—Father Charles H. McKenna.

As Charles McKenna, while in Dubuque, was an active member of the church societies of the cathedral parish, he soon made the acquaintance of the Right Rev. Matthias Loras, the first bishop of the diocese, and his coadjutor, the Right Rev. Clement T. Smyth. With Bishop Smyth, indeed, he lived on terms of inti-

mate friendship, and received much assistance from him in the study of Latin.

In May, 1859, the Very Rev. Joseph A. Kelly, then provincial of the Dominicans, paid an official visit to the college at Sinsinawa Mound, about eight miles from Dubuque. While in Sinsinawa he called, with Father Jarboe, to pay his respects to Bishop Smyth. The good prelate, mindful of his friend's interests, at once sent word to Charles McKenna to call at the episcopal residence to meet the one man whom he especially desired to see—the provincial of the Dominicans. Needless to say, the earnest candidate hastened to bare his life and aspirations to Father Kelly. The application of one so highly recommended by Bishop Smyth was of course favorably received, and the young man was referred to Father Jarboe for admittance to Sinsinawa Mound College.

Strange are the ways of providence! For years had Charles McKenna ardently desired to enter the Order of Saint Dominic; yet Fathers Kelly and Jarboe were the first Dominicans he had ever met. Nor had he yet seen the Dominican habit, except in the picture of Saint Thomas of Aquin. Good, genial Father Jarboe invited him on this occasion to pay a visit to Sinsinawa Mound before entering the college. While on his way to this institution, in the early summer of the same year, the future missionary descried in the distance the Rev. James B. McGovern, then a professor in the college, walking along the country road and dressed in the flowing white gown of a Dominican friar. At first, the pious young man was tempted to believe that he beheld an apparition, or that an angel had been sent to direct his steps. It was the first time

he had ever seen a Friar Preacher in the full garb of his Order. The vision brought to our young candidate's mind the picture of Saint Thomas Aquinas he had seen in Ireland in the early days of his youth, which had given him so strong and so persistent a desire to become a Dominican. The illusion, of course, was soon dispelled, and the two men then began a friendship that was to be broken only by death.

Some of our readers perhaps may think that Charles McKenna unwisely tempted providence and trifled with his vocation by bestowing so much time and attention on his family, while the best years of his life for study were slipping away. But not so was the judgment of this devoted Catholic son. He had an unbounded confidence in the providence of God which he firmly believed would reward his filial devotion. His was a brave heart; and a brave heart's way of seeking comfort in days or years of stress and trial is to redouble prayer and effort—to sow the good seed of virtue, and then patiently wait, however gloomy the outlook, for the fruit and grain until God's appointed time of harvest. The Scriptural commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God has commanded thee, that thou mayest live a long time, and it may be well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God will give thee," was a living precept to Charles McKenna.[1] He could not bring himself to leave a mother whose love for him had been proved by so many heroic sacrifices, until he was assured that her every temporal comfort would be provided for. He felt that the divine will was that he should provide for her before entering the religious

[1] Deuteronomy V., 16.

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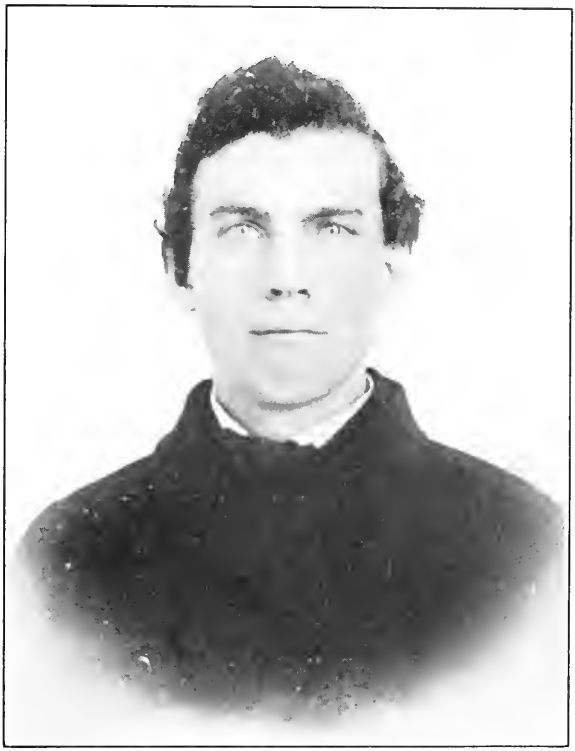


CHARLES McKENNA AS STUDENT AT SINSINAWA MOUND COLLEGE.

Order to which he was so strongly impelled. And the good man's after life shows that he received the blessings which God promises those who honor their parents.

At last Charles McKenna's prayers were heard, his patience rewarded, his filial piety blessed. The long period of anxious waiting was at an end. Thus, at the fall opening of 1859, we find him enrolled among the students of the Dominican college at Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin. He was then four and twenty years of age. Between the sturdy young man and the president of the college, Father Jarboe, a bond of affection had been established at their meeting in Dubuque. Indeed, the learned and fatherly priest's sympathetic friendship was now to prove most useful to our student in many ways. Charles' exemplary conduct and strong character led to his appointment as one of the prefects for the boys almost from the beginning of his college days. As his deft hands were ever willing to work, many small tasks were given him about the yard and buildings at odd hours, on days of recreation and during the summer vacations which he spent principally at the institution. For all these—largely out of consideration for his heroic battle to provide for his mother and to get an education, and because he was to give his life to the Order—so liberal an allowance was made that his schooling cost him practically nothing. In this way, when he left the Mound, Charles McKenna was able to give his mother more than he had ever expected, thus making doubly sure the matter of her temporal comfort.

Shortly after the commencement of the civil war, however, Father Jarboe, in response to an appeal of

his provincial and Bishop Spalding of Louisville, Kentucky, for chaplains for the Confederate armies, offered his services for that dangerous post. The departure of the kindly president from the Mound was deeply felt by Charles McKenna as a personal loss; but he soon found another not less sympathetic friend in the new president, the Rev. Sydney A. Clarkson.

Scientists tell us that the large brain, if of the right quality and given the opportunity, although it may be slow in its development, has latent powers that will tell in the end. So it seems to have been with our future great Dominican preacher and missionary. But it must not be forgotten that by much reading and private study he had planted the germ of a mental life which was now to have a healthy, vigorous growth. At college Charles McKenna applied himself assiduously to his studies and made rapid progress. What with his previous preparation, what with his extraordinary application and what with the extra care given him by the fathers because of his mature years and his earnest desire to enter the Order, he led in his classes. In some branches he covered two years' work in one. Rarely, indeed, was he without a book in hand. Unless when occupied with his little manual tasks, recreation meant no change for him, except a change of study. The two long summer vacations he spent at Sinsinawa Mound were passed with his treasured books, in the mastering of which he was assisted by the fathers. In this way, at the end of two years and a half of college training, he had acquired a good liberal education—particularly a first-rate knowledge of the Latin language, to which he gave special attention because so necessary in the life of a priest.

But what was of even greater importance for the future of the ardent student than his progress in his studies, was that at Sinsinawa his eager soul became saturated with the apostolic zeal of Father Mazzuchelli, whose spirit permeated the institution. In after years, the noted preacher and missionary often spoke of a retreat he made at this time under the direction of that holy priest as one of the most fruitful of his life. From Mazzuchelli he also learned of the heroic and self-sacrificing labors of Father John T. Van den Broek, O.P., among the Indians on the missions of Wisconsin. The knowledge the young candidate to the Order acquired at the Mound of the lives of these two great men inspired him for a time with the desire to devote his own life to labor among the Indians or other barbarous peoples.[2] But the information which Charles McKenna acquired during his college days of the labors of the Friars Preacher in the United States was not limited to the northwest. From Father Jarboe, who had almost grown up with Saint Rose's, in Kentucky, he learned the province's early history and traditions—the mortified and saintly lives led by its founders, and their struggles in the first years of its existence. All these impressions of the Order he was about to join served to strengthen still more the future orator's desire to become a Dominican and to spur him on to greater efforts. Impressions they were which he held sacred until the day of his death.

It was in the March of 1862 that Charles McKenna

2 For the life and labors of Father Mazzuchelli, see *Golden Bells in Convent Towers,* Chicago, 1904; and *Memoirs of Father Mazzuchelli,* Chicago, 1915. For those of Father Van den Broek, see *The Story of Father Van den Broek, O.P.,* Chicago, 1907.

left the college of Sinsinawa Mound to visit his aged mother before going to the Dominican novitiate of Saint Joseph's, near Somerset, Ohio. His stay with her must have been brief, for we find him in Ohio on the seventeenth of the same month. The reader may imagine the sentiments of those two deeply attached souls on the occasion of their final parting. Sentiments they must have been in which sorrow and joy struggled for the mastery—the sorrow that is ever caused by such separations, and the joy that Christian hearts cannot but experience at the call of a divine vocation. At Saint Joseph's our zealous postulant spent more than a month in seclusion, praying to know the will of God, and, in case it was that he should be a Friar Preacher, for the grace to live in its perfection the life required by the rule of the Order of Saint Dominic. This brief period closed with a retreat of ten days preparatory to the reception of the Dominican habit.

Before receiving the habit, the young postulant was subjected to a searching examination by the prior and the council of the convent. In addition to this, as is required by both papal law and the Order's constitutions, he had to answer certain important questions, and to give solemn assurance that he had no duties or obligations which obliged him to remain in the world. It was well, then, that the young man had made provision for his mother; for a son's first duty is to his parents, and the Order will accept no one as a postulant whose services are required at home.

On April 20, 1862, Charles McKenna entered the conventual choir, where the community was assembled. At a signal from the prior, the Very Rev.

Michael D. Lilly, he prostrated himself on the floor, as prescribed by the constitutions, his arms outstretched in the form of a cross. "What is it you seek?" (*quid quaeris?*), asked the superior. "God's mercy and yours" (*misericordiam Dei et vestram*), replied the humble candidate. Then, at another signal, he rose to listen reverently to the admonition of the superior. All this is formula whose significance is consecrated by time and usage. The prostration typifies immolation of one's self on the altar of humility and obedience. The intent of both question and answer is to signify to the postulant that, if he is to live the life of a religious, he is no longer to seek or to depend on self; that henceforth he is to have no will of his own, but is to be subject in all things to that of his superiors. He is to do not the work of his own liking, but that assigned him. He is to live and to labor not where he chooses, but where he is sent. The provincial may send him anywhere in his province; the Master General to any part of the globe. All this Father Lilly explained to the kneeling postulant, together with the obligation he was about to assume of bearing patiently the onera and austerities imposed by the rule of Saint Dominic—a wise regulation, for the life of a Friar Preacher is not an easy one. In its entirety it is a life of prayer and heroic labor for souls. Of the mercy of God the applicant was assured, on condition that he prove faithful to the rule of the Order.

As on all similar occasions, the prior closed his address with the question: "Do you wish, by the grace of God, to undertake all this in the measure of your strength?" The emphatic reply was: "I do." The superior then added the prayer: "May God complete

that which He has begun!"; and the community answered, "Amen."

While the strains of "Come, O Holy Ghost!" (*Veni Creator*) rose heavenwards, Charles McKenna, kneeling before the prior, laid aside his secular garb and was clothed by the superior with the flowing tunic, the long scapular and the capuche—all in white. Over these was placed the black mantle to complete the Order's habit. Then he prostrated himself a second time on the sanctuary floor, as the prayers of the liturgy were recited to invoke heaven's blessing upon him. At a given signal he arose, was sprinkled with holy water, and, while the brethren sang: "Holy God, we praise Thy name" (the *Te Deum*), received the kiss of peace from each member of the community—a symbol of the new brotherhood into which he had been received. All this is rubric consecrated by ages of custom.

In most of the orders of the Church it is customary at the clothing for the newly received member to add the name of another patron saint to that received in baptism. By this new name rather than by his baptismal name is he generally known in religion. The religious name then given Charles McKenna was Hyacinth, after Saint Hyacinth, the great Dominican missionary and apostle of Poland. Was this prophetic, one might ask, of the new novice's future labors? Truly, his after life would justify such a belief.

With the reception of the habit begins the novitiate in every religious order, a period of from one to two years' duration according to the laws of the respective institutes. In that of Saint Dominic it covers a twelvemonth, unless prolonged by the superior. It is

the beginning of the religious life and a time of trial and formation. The new member is placed under the care of the master of novices, whose duty it is to train and form him according to the rules, constitutions and traditions of his Order, or even the laudable customs of the province to which he belongs. The novice's home is now the conventual cloister, wherein his soul lives in an atmosphere of piety and is steeped, day by day, in that spiritual and supernatural life after which he must strive, and which henceforth must be the inspiration of all his actions. Cut off from distracting cares by monastic walls, the novice's constant effort, if he desires to live the ideal life of his Order, must be gradually to shape himself to that ideal by means of the regulations of his convent and institute. All these are so many aids to perfection for the soul thus freed from the world and its influences. Among them are the rules of prayer and meditation, study and recollection, the choral office, in which the divine praises are chanted or sung in common by the community at appointed times, private devotions, examens, and other spiritual exercises—all under the guidance of the master of novices. As Saint Dominic believed that the health of the body is essential to the health of the soul, for the former a reasonable amount of recreation and physical exercise has been prescribed. But silence, so necessary for prayer, study and recollection, is the general rule. It is medicine for the soul; a source of strength to the spiritual athlete in training for the Church's combats. During the simple novitiate, or the time that intervenes between the reception of the habit and the religious profession a twelvemonth later, the novice is to be drilled rigorously in all these things, that they

may become habits, and that he may learn whether or not he is called to such a state of life. He is free to return to the world at any time before making his profession.

While the prior is the highest authority in the convent, it is especially the duty of the master of novices, under whose immediate jurisdiction and more intimate influence they are placed, to preside over the religious formation of the aspirants to full membership in the Order. Brother Hyacinth McKenna's master of novices, with the exception of the first month or so of his novitiate, was the saintly Father James Alphonsus Sheridan. Father Sheridan was a man of high spirituality and much given to mortification. None who came under his care failed to receive a thorough religious training, even in its minutest details. With watchful eye did he direct their spiritual growth, inculcate the three essentials of all religious life—obedience, poverty and chastity—enforce the rules, seek to eradicate tendencies opposed to common life, foster the formation of good habits, implant the cardinal virtue of humility, and insist on the observance of the traditional practices of the Order. In all this the zealous priest's efforts were the more fruitful because he was himself a living example of the religious life and led the way in whatever he taught. On the one hand, he wisely encouraged those in whom he found signs of a true vocation; on the other, he carefully yet kindly weeded out those who did not give good promise.

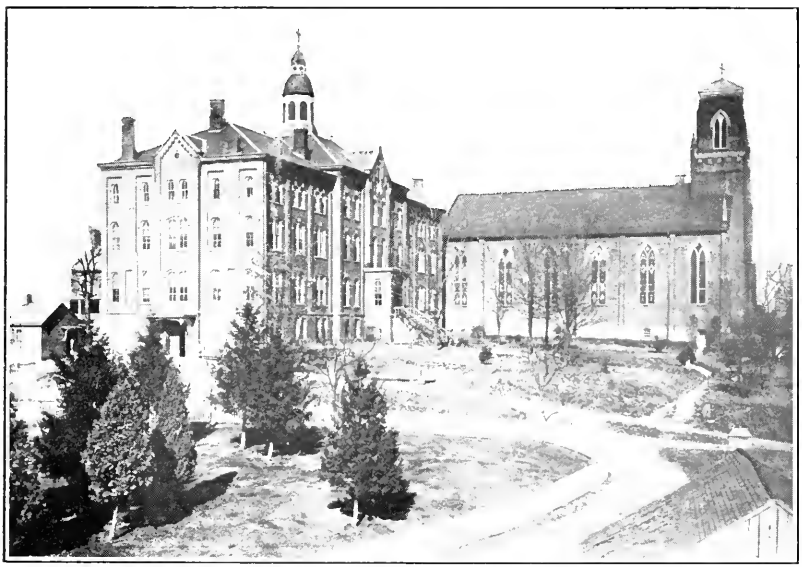
The early training that Charles McKenna received from his Christian mother and the life he had led in the world, had been an excellent preparation for the life he was to lead in religion—perhaps the more so

because it is not the aim of the Order of Saint Dominic to destroy individuality by shaping all its members after any one model; but rather so to train them that, while through grace and years of formation they will become exemplary and efficient subjects, grounded in sound habits and true to the spirit of their Order, their individuality will remain intact, shorn merely of its shortcomings. Thus, the religious formation of our novice was a comparatively easy matter both for himself and for his novice-master. The difficulty often experienced in surrendering one's will to that of another, especially when one enters religion at the mature age of our novice, was not met with in the case of Brother Hyacinth McKenna. From the beginning he was a model religious, exact in the observance of the rule of his Order, submissive to his superiors, punctual in obedience, deeply devout, keenly anxious to advance in perfection.

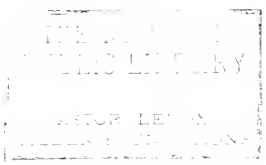
Saint Joseph's Convent, situated in the hills of Perry County, Ohio, about two and a quarter miles from Somerset, was made a novitiate for the Friars Preacher in the United States in the forties of the last century. The novitiates of the Order through all the seven hundred years of its existence have been marked by a severe simplicity. Each novice has a small separate room, just large enough to contain a bed, a table and one or two chairs. No luxury is allowed. His couch is hard; the only ornaments of his cell a crucifix and a few pious pictures. The part of the house in which these young aspirants live must be shut off from that occupied by the fathers. But the extreme poverty of the American province at the time of Charles McKenna's entrance into the Order caused life at

the novitiate of Saint Joseph's to be not merely the plainest of the plain, but even exceptionally severe. The food of the novices was both poor in quality and scant in quantity; their clothing barely sufficient. A brave heart and a strong constitution were then required for perseverance. Thus, about the only temporal solace Brother Hyacinth enjoyed during his year of probation was found in the kindness of his superiors, the companionship of his fellow novices at the hours of recreation, the peaceful charm and the pastoral simplicity of the surrounding country. Yet he was happy and joyful with a spiritual joy, for he was united to God by the bonds of the religious life and on the highway to the attainment of his life's ambition.

Early to bed and early to rise was the rule of the young neophytes. At four-twenty in the morning the excitator rang the bell; then he gently tapped at the door of each, calling out, as he did so, "Let us praise the Lord" (*Benedicamus Domino*). To this the occupant of the cell responded: "Thanks be to God" (*Deo gratias*), as he rose promptly from his couch. With this began the round of the day's exercises. In twenty minutes all were in choir for morning prayers, meditation and mass. Then followed a frugal breakfast, after which came such household duties as making their beds, cleaning their rooms, sweeping the corridors and the hall for recreation; for in the Order cleanliness is next to godliness. Beginning with eight o'clock, some classes, lessons in the rule, constitutions and chant of the Order, spiritual reading, instructions and other religious exercises, interspersed now and then with a modest amount of manual labor and odd moments of recreation, followed one another in regu-



SAINT JOSEPH'S PRIORY AND CHURCH, SOMERSET OHIO.



lar succession throughout the day. Everything had its place and its importance. Through all the training of the Order concrete personal results are sought, not vague, intangible generalities; for the former only are met with in real life and go to form real character, whether in or out of religion.

In this way, Brother Hyacinth McKenna's year of strict novitiate passed quickly and happily.[3] Next to the attainment of personal sanctity, in accordance with the special rule of his own institute, he sought, under the guidance of Father Sheridan, to realize in himself the ideals of Saint Dominic, the founder of the great Order towards which he had been impelled from his childhood as if by some mystic power. For this reason, he devoted much of his spare time to the study of the life and labors of the holy man of Caleruega and the other saints of the Order. Thus, in the days of his novitiate he laid the foundations of a wide knowledge of Dominican history and traditions. Subjects of a kindred character nearer home also occupied his mind at this time. But of this later.

Towards the end of his novitiate Brother Hyacinth was unanimously admitted for his religious profession. On April 20, 1863, kneeling before his prior, in the presence of his sacramental God, his hands placed between those of his superior and supporting the book of constitutions, the pious novice read in unfaltering voice these words which made him a member of the Order of Saint Dominic:

"I, Brother Charles Hyacinth McKenna, make my religious profession and promise obedience to God, to the Blessed Virgin

[3] The happy year he spent in the novitiate was another topic on which the good priest loved to descant with the students of the Order.

Mary, to Saint Dominic, and to you, Very Rev. Father Michael Dominic Lilly, prior of this convent of St. Joseph and holding the place of the Most Rev. Vincent Jandel, Master General of the Order, and his successors, according to the rule of Saint Augustine and the constitutions of the Friars Preacher. To you and to your successors I promise obedience until death."

Nothing could be more simple, or at the same time more solemn and sublime in its extreme simplicity, than the ceremonial for profession among the Friars Preacher. As a modern writer beautifully expresses it:

"The absence of all external splendour sets in clear light the superhuman beauty and the profound signification of what is taking place. Here is simply a man who is giving himself to God, wholly, unreservedly, until death. And he says so in a few brief words shorn of all rhetoric; yet no one who retains any sense of supramundane realities can fail to be stirred to the very depths of his soul when he witnesses the scene."[4]

The new member promises obedience first of all to God, to show that he obeys Him rather than man. He promises obedience to the Blessed Virgin, whereby he is reminded that the Queen of Heaven is the patroness and protectrix of the Order, to whom all its members owe a special filial devotion. While the name of the visible head of the Church is not mentioned, every one knows that the Order and its brethren are subject to the Sovereign Pontiff in all things. The name of Saint Dominic is included that each newly professed member may the more readily realize that the founder of the Order, next to the Divine Master, is the ideal after which he should strive to

[4] POPE, *The Friar Preacher Yesterday and Today* (an English translation of Père Jaquin's *Le Frère Prêcheur Autrefois et Aujourdhui*), p. 140.

model his life as a religious. And, finally, the reason for making the profession to the local superior, not in his own name, but as acting in the place of the Master General, is to signify where the supreme authority and the principle of unity in the Order lie. But, as is shown by the last sentence in the form of profession, this by no means frees the subject from the strictest obligation of full and complete obedience to every superior under whom he may be placed. Obedience, indeed, is regarded as the very essence of the Order's life. It is, in fact, expressly to emphasize this important truth that it is the only one of the three religious vows mentioned in the formula of profession—those of poverty and chastity being contained in that of obedience, as beauty and sweetness in the rose, or as purity and sanctity in the soul.

At his profession the Friar Preacher takes upon himself the obligation of making the rule of Saint Augustine and the constitutions of the Order of Saint Dominic, in addition to canon law and the Catholic code of morality, the guide of his life. He binds himself to strive after perfection; and for this reason, he may no longer rest content with the observance of things of precept merely, but also must strive to follow the evangelical counsels.

All this Brother Hyacinth McKenna knew well. With full knowledge and a brave heart did he take these obligations upon himself when he gave himself, in the spring of 1863, wholly and unreservedly to God. How well he fulfilled them will be seen in the course of these pages.

CHAPTER V.

CLERICAL STUDENT.

(1862–1867)

THE simple or strict novitiate of a Dominican is followed by what is known in the Order as the novitiate of professed clerics, which extends over a period of four or more years, according as one has or has not made any philosophical or theological studies prior to entering the institute. While it is not devoted so expressly to the religious training of the young men as the simple novitiate, this period also is a time of spiritual formation, the purpose of which is further to prepare them for their vocation.[1]

The religious life is a striving after perfection. Absolute perfection, which means a perfect union with God through charity or love of Him above all things else, and of our fellowman for His sake, is a prerogative of the saints in heaven. Although our fallen nature and inherent limitations prevent the attainment of such a perfect union with God here on earth, it is the ideal after which religious are bound by their state and their vows to strive. This is why the religious life is called a state of perfection. While the various orders differ in spirit, habit and vocation, they all agree in this, that they aim to bring their subjects nearer to God through the bond of charity. The means by which the

[1] Everyone, even those who are priests before entering the Order, are required by law to spend at least five years under the direction of the master of novices.

members of every religious organization must approach the ideal the blessed in heaven have realized, is fidelity to the rules and constitutions of their respective institutes. But monastic observances are hard to human nature. One must needs be trained to them until they become firmly ingrained habits—a second nature that is not the growth of any brief period, but the product of years of earnest, systematic effort. For this reason a long course of religious formation is of paramount importance in any religious order. It is especially necessary in that of the Friars Preacher, whose lives are pre-eminently apostolic, and whose vocation demands that they follow the example of their founder, going out into the world to accomplish their mission of saving souls.

The Dominican has a twofold life. Having many things in common with the Canon Regular, from whom he is descended, he is deeply contemplative. Yet, he is by no means a monk; for his life is above all things active and apostolic. The prime object of Saint Dominic's Order is the salvation of souls by preaching and teaching, and the Friar Preacher must prepare himself within cloistered walls by prayer and contemplation for the effective exercise of this ministry. Thus, while prayer and contemplation are the end of the monk's life, in that of the Dominican they are a means to an end. The young Friar Preacher must pray and meditate, practice obedience, humility and mortification, ground himself in good habits and sound principles, acquire a love of God and zeal for souls, study to become a learned priest—all with a view not merely to his own personal sanctification, but to prepare himself to become a fruitful harvester of souls.

This was the ideal which Brother Hyacinth McKenna, under the direction of the pious master of novices, constantly endeavored to realize in himself throughout his professed novitiate. His aim was not merely to ground himself well in those solid virtues which would be so necessary in his future life as a priest engaged in the Lord's vineyard, but to imbibe the spirit that would make him a true son of the founder of his Order—Saint Dominic.

The lives of the Order's saints and blessed, its traditions and those of his own province, were both food for Brother Hyacinth's soul and an inspiration to continue his preparation for the priestly labors he looked forward to with eagerness. Happily, he was located at an institution where he could drink, to his heart's content, of the province's best traditions. No spot in Ohio is so hallowed with memories of its early missions and missionaries as old Saint Joseph's, the cradle of Catholicity in the state. These were topics that ever appealed with special force to Brother Hyacinth. At Saint Joseph's he learned to admire the heroic sacrifices made by his brethren in behalf of Ohio's infant Church, and rejoiced that members of his Order were the apostles of that flourishing commonwealth. The pious student lived and re-lived in spirit the lives of such men as Bishops Fenwick, Miles and Hynes, Fathers John A. Hill, Samuel L. and Charles P. Montgomery, Thomas Martin, Daniel J. O'Leary, Raphael Muños, John V. De Raymacker, Anthony D. Fahy and Nicholas D. Young, not to mention a score or more of others who had labored there with great success in the early days.

Happily, Father Dominic Young still lived. It was

the patriarchal missionary's custom, when on his occasional visits to the scenes of his former apostolic labors, to regale the clerical students with stories of the lives, work and hardships of the fathers in the olden times, both in Ohio, where he had been one of the first to sow the seed of the Gospel, and in Kentucky, where he had been one of the first to enter the Order of Friars Preacher in the United States. These visits of the pioneer priest were as balm to the soul of Brother Hyacinth McKenna. With avidity did he drink in the history and the traditions of the beginnings of his province in the New World; and these he treasured as highly as he did those of the early days of the Order in the Old.

But to make these influences in the life of Father McKenna clearer to the reader a brief word on the history of Ohio's early Church is necessary. It was in 1808, or 1810, that Father Edward Dominic Fenwick, at the request of Bishop Flaget and with the consent of his provincial, made his first visit to Ohio from Kentucky. The discovery on this occasion of three German Catholic families at Somerset, Perry County, marks the birth of Catholicity in a state in which the growth of the Church has been so marvelous that it has today a metropolitan see and three bishoprics, together with a Catholic population of about eight hundred thousand. From that time Father Fenwick made periodical missionary tours through Ohio until late in 1816 or early in 1817, when he began to give his entire attention to the Catholics of the north. In 1818 he was joined in these labors by his nephew, Rev. N. D. Young. This latter year was made memorable by the erection of Ohio's first Catholic temple of prayer, Saint Joseph's,

near Somerset; for it was on December 6, 1818, that the little log church, dedicated to the foster-father of our Lord, was blessed by Fathers Fenwick and Young and opened to the faithful.

Alone, these two sons of Saint Dominic traversed the state in every direction for more than three years "in search of strayed sheep," to employ a phrase that has been canonized from its use by Ohio's first saintly ordinary. February 13, 1822, Father Fenwick was consecrated bishop of the newly created see of Cincinnati; and from that date until the arrival, in 1833, of Bishop Purcell, Cincinnati's second ordinary, few besides the white-robed friars gave their lives to the missions of Ohio. Those were hard days; the labors were harder. None have given themselves more generously to or deserved better of the Church in Ohio than the Friars Preacher. Their hands planted it; their toil cultivated it; the sweat of their brows watered it; with watchful eye they looked after its growth.

It was at the two well-springs of Dominicanism in the United States, Saint Joseph's, Somerset, Ohio, and Saint Rose's, Springfield, Kentucky, around which still cling many precious memories of the heroic past, that the subject of our biography received his training in the religious life. Nor can it be denied, we think, that their traditions played an important part in the formation of his character.

It is not, as has been said, the spirit of the Order to unmake one's individuality, but rather to develop it along sane lines, eliminating merely undesirable personal peculiarities. Nor is the Order's spirit at all morose; it is one of joy and reasonable cheerfulness. This, in part, explains an interesting incident that is told

of the present period of Brother Hyacinth's religious life. Pious, humble and retiring though he was, at times he indulged in a modest use of his native Irish wit. After his profession he was appointed sacristan. As sacristan it was his duty to prepare altar necessaries for the fathers in charge of the various country missions then attended from Saint Joseph's. One of the reverend clergymen, a rather officious character, often took it upon himself to reprove Brother Hyacinth. On one occasion, when he had been more than usually severe, the good priest remarked by way of apology: "Brother, I do this on principle; for I believe it a good thing to try novices, that we may learn their disposition before admitting them to the final profession." "Father," was the ready reply, "I did not know the devil had employed you to tempt the novices." Needless to say, this was the last time that Father ———— essayed such an explanation of his reprimands.

After simple profession, the Order's long, serious course of studies begins in earnest. The study of scholastic philosophy and theology, for which the Friar Preacher is noted, covers a period of seven years. Of these, three years are given to the former subject and four to the latter. But while these two sciences, because the students are destined for the priesthood, demand first consideration in the curriculum, the other branches usual in institutions of higher Catholic education, such as Scripture, canon law and history, must go side by side with scholasticism. Yet, if these latter studies are to be given especial attention, this must be done after the completion of the ordinary curriculum. Today one must make an additional two years' post-

graduate course before being allowed to teach in any studium of the Order. Only in exceptional cases, or exceptional circumstances, is there a deviation from these rules. That the studies may be the more advantageous because of their continuity, they are not allowed, in spite of their length, to be interrupted.[2]

Because of his years and the great need for priests at the time, an exception was made for Brother Hyacinth McKenna. During his simple novitiate, for instance, he was permitted to begin the study of philosophy, into which he entered with the earnestness that characterized his entire life. But he did not suffer the subtleties of scholasticism to interfere with the observance of the rule or the practice of his religious duties—to chill his love of prayer or his thirst after perfection.

Now that his simple novitiate was completed, the hardworking student gave himself up to his ecclesiastical studies with all the ardor of his soul. Here, too, his progress was most satisfactory, as had been his success in the classics at the college of Sinsinawa Mound.

Trials, it is said, at least in early life, contribute much towards the making of a man, whether in the temporal or spiritual order. The reader may fancy that the young Friar Preacher had already received more than his share; but the divine wisdom, with deeper vision, had yet others in store for him, possibly further to purify his great soul now that he had entered upon the higher life.

Early in January, 1864, just when the future orator and missionary had well begun his ecclesiastical course, the church and convent of Saint Joseph were burned, upsetting the community and increasing the burden of

[2] The Order's constitutions have many regulations on this heading.

poverty with which the institution was already oppressed. Close upon this disaster followed another. In the spring of the same year troubles induced by the Civil War necessitated a division of the novices. Brother Hyacinth McKenna was sent to Sinsinawa Mound, where he had the happiness of seeing his good mother, and where he continued his studies until he could return to Ohio. We see him back at old Saint Joseph's, however, for the fall term of 1864; but overapplication and the confined life of a student had now begun to undermine the strong constitution that had been accustomed to hard labor in the open air. Indeed, his health was so broken that for the remainder of his scholastic days he was obliged to do the greater part of his studying out of doors.

Yet, it would seem from the following letter to his sister—the earliest we have been able to find from his pen—that the humble student was anxious to conceal the knowledge of his ill health from his people. The document deserves insertion in its entirety, as it shows how far life in a religious order is from drying up the well of natural love for one's family, and gives us an insight into the young Friar Preacher's high ideals and deep piety.

"St. Joseph's Convent,
"Feb. 27, 1866.

"*Dear Sister:*

"It is now several weeks since I wrote you, but I have not yet received an answer. I wanted to know in my last letter whether you had heard anything of John or not. Since then I received a letter from Alick informing me that he had written home, inviting John here, and that he expects him out in the Spring. Alick states that Mother and Matty are well, and that his own health is as usual.

"My own health, thanks to our dear Lord, is good, notwithstanding the black fast of Lent and close application to studies. I have nothing of importance to communicate, except that our Most Rev. Archbishop was here and conferred minor orders on ten novices, three of whom afterwards were elevated to the sublime dignity of the priesthood. I, thanks to the mercies of our Lord, was one of the ten; but, I need not add, I was not of the three. But this, I suppose, is no longer news, as an account of the ordination has been published in many of the Catholic papers.[3]

"Applications for admission into our hallowed walls were never so numerous as at present. Eternal thanks to our great Creator! His voice is still heard calling His chosen few to forsake all and follow Him. Dear Sister, the next few months will be the most important in my life. It is for this I write in order to recommend myself more earnestly than ever to your prayers, and to those of the children. Recommend also your intention to some fervent souls. And be assured that I will not forget you and them hereafter.

"Oh, my Dear Sister, think of that sublime dignity to which so miserable a wretch as I aspire! What purity, what sanctity is necessary to approach the *Infinite Sanctity!* to hold, to consecrate, to receive and to administer the adorable Lord of heaven and earth! Pray, then, unceasingly that the Divine Master may purify and sanctify His most unworthy servant; and beseech the purest of creatures, our dear Immaculate Mother, that she may obtain for me some of those graces that were so pleasing in the sight of God as to draw upon her the eternal love.

"I had a Mass said today for poor Neil, and one last week for my father. Remember my request. Write soon to your loving

"Brother Hyacinth, O.S.D.

"Tell the children that Uncle Charley does not forget them."[4]

[3] He received minor orders, February 2, 1866.

[4] Letter to Mrs. Roger Dougherty, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; copy furnished by Miss Mary Dougherty.

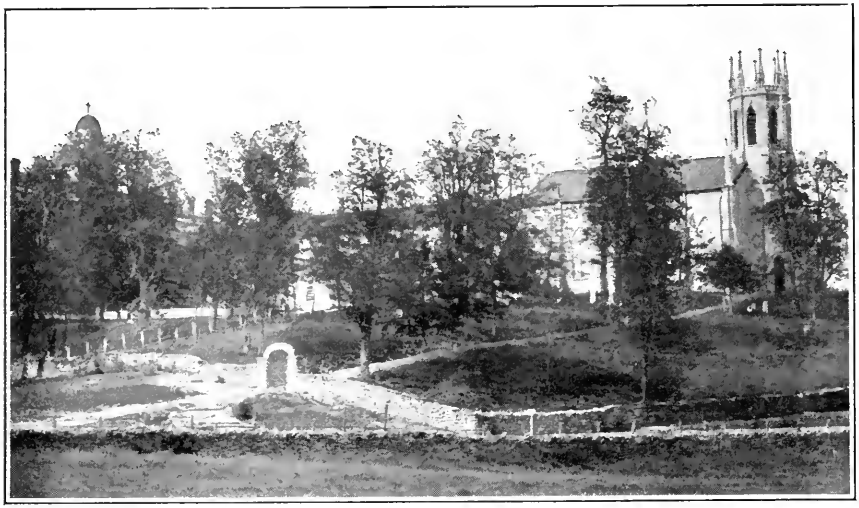
After the burning of Saint Joseph's Convent in 1864, the college of the same name which had been suspended—owing to the war—was used as a shelter for the community. But a second disaster was now to rob them of this home also. On June 7, 1866, Saint Mary's Academy, at Somerset, was destroyed by fire, and the good Dominican sisters who were thus left without a roof, were given the use of the college buildings. The fathers' residence was transferred to a small brick house at the rear of the church, while the novices were sent with their master to Saint Rose's Priory, near Springfield, Kentucky.

Truly a man of God, our friar student bore all these trials and changes with patience and resignation. He felt that the power of Him who had sent them could and would bring good out of evil for those who loved Him. Nor did the laborious novice suffer his broken health to be the occasion of negligence in his studies. None, indeed, studied harder than he, or were more regular in attendance at class. Even in the summer vacations he might be seen any day strolling leisurely through the primeval woods that then stood near the convent, or sitting under the shade of some majestic tree, absorbed in study of the Sacred Scriptures or poring over a volume of theology, history, or biography. With him study and reading were not only a pleasure, but a sacred means of preparing for the great mission towards which he anxiously looked forward.

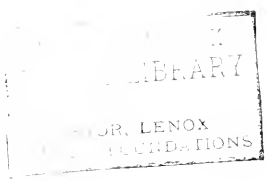
From more than one point of view, Brother Hyacinth McKenna's transfer to Kentucky was a fortunate circumstance in his life. His residence there completed his education in the history and early traditions of his Order in the United States. The cradle

of the Order in the country, no place is so rich in reminiscences of the province's founders or of its first labors and struggles as old Saint Rose's; no spot so intimately connected with such revered names as those of the learned Father Samuel T. Wilson and the saintly Fathers Edward D. Fenwick and William R. Tuite. For this reason, Saint Rose's gained a strong hold on Father McKenna's affections. To the day of his death he never tired speaking of the four happy years he spent at that place. There also he came into intimate contact with one who perhaps more than any other exercised a formative influence on his life—the Rev. Matthew A. O'Brien, O.P., who was regarded as a saint by all who knew him.

In Kentucky also the future missioner had for one of his professors Father Bernard Chocarne, the learned author of the *Inner Life* of the eminent Dominican orator and restorer of the Order of Friars Preacher in France—Père Lacordaire. Possibly it was through Father Chocarne that he was introduced to the rich field of ecclesiastical literature offered the student of the French language, which the holy man later became so fond of reading. From Father Chocarne also he learned about Père Lacordaire's life, both public and private, about the aims of the great preacher and saintly religious, as well as about his opinions on the true spirit and work of the Dominican Order. But of this we shall have to speak in the following chapter, in which we shall treat of Father McKenna's ordination and the first years of his priesthood.



SAINT ROSE'S CHURCH AND PRIORY, SPRINGFIELD, KENTUCKY.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CHAPTER VI.

ORDINATION, YOUNG PRIEST AND MASTER OF NOVICES.

(1867–1870)

Because of his impaired health, his age and the great need for priests, Brother Hyacinth McKenna's course of philosophy was shortened by one year. Thus by the fall of 1867 he was ready for ordination. But as the see of Louisville was then without an ordinary, he could not be ordained in the diocese in which he lived. Accordingly, he was sent to Cincinnati where (in the cathedral) he received subdeaconship from Bishop Quinlan of Mobile, October 11, and on the two following days was ordained successively deacon and priest by the Most Rev. John B. Purcell.

The present custom of allowing the newly ordained to go to their homes that their parents may have the consolation of assisting at their first holy sacrifice of the mass, did not exist in those more rugged days. So the young priest returned to Saint Rose's Convent, where he celebrated his first solemn mass the following Sunday, October 20, 1867, in the little country church of the same name attached to the priory. The dream of the holy man's life had now become a reality—he was a Dominican friar and a priest of God. He was supremely happy, except for his ardent desire to satisfy his aged mother's longing to see him officiate at the altar as a minister of the Almighty. This favor also was soon to be granted him, for in response to the

good woman's entreaties he was allowed to pay her a brief visit. Arriving at Bankston Settlement, Iowa, Friday, November 15, he said mass the next three mornings in the Church of Saint Clement in the presence of his mother and sisters, and preached on Sunday. Mrs. McKenna's maternal heart must have been full to overflowing on this occasion, which was the last time but one they met on earth.[1]

Rev. Charles H. McKenna was thirty-two years of age at the time of his ordination. Although he was left at Saint Rose's as a student priest, early in 1868 his deep piety and exemplary religious life led to his appointment as assistant to Father Sheridan, the master of novices. A little later in the same year, when Father Sheridan was sent to Saint Louis Bertrand's, Louisville, to fill the post of master of the professed novices, who had been transferred to that place from Saint Rose's in the fall of 1867, our future missioner, now that he had completed his studies, succeeded to the position of master of the simple novices at the latter institution.

In those days, as there were few priests and much to be done, we often find many offices vested in one man. In addition to the responsible position mentioned, young Father McKenna was soon appointed subprior in his convent and confessor to the Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine's Academy, about a half-mile from the priory. In the discharge of these various offices he showed the same spirit of zeal and unflagging industry that had characterized his previous life as a student and as a man in the world. The objects of his principal solicitude, however, were the

[1] The last time Father McKenna saw his mother was in 1869, when he was called home on pressing business.

young neophytes of the Order. Faithfully did he walk in the footsteps of his own revered master, Father Sheridan. With painstaking care did he teach the young men under his charge; drill them in the ways of prayer and meditation; instruct them in the rules, rubrics and constitutions, spirit and traditions of the Order, and in the customs of his province: in a word, form them in the religious life.

To give in detail Father McKenna's method of training the young candidates for the Order were but to repeat what has been said already of his own formation. He had, however, a broader view of things and a truer appreciation of the scope, end and purpose of the life of the Friar Preacher than his predecessor; and this view and appreciation he sought prudently and carefully to instil into the minds of his youthful charges.[2]

With his deep piety was blended a breadth of mind which told him that the spirit of his Order did not demand the ever unrelaxed life of a Carthusian; that occasional amusements were good for the soul, as well as for the body. During the hours of recreation, he insisted that the novices should enjoy themselves, and he himself joined in their innocent sports with all the ardor of his Celtic temperament. This twofold side of Father McKenna's character we see aptly illustrated in the following letter to Brother Antoninus McFeeley.

"St. Rose's Convent,

"*Dear Brother Anthony.* "November 4, 1868.

"Please excuse me for not answering your letter sooner. One reason of the delay was want of matter. I might allege

2 Saintly Father Sheridan believed that the life of a Dominican was contemplative rather than active. But of this anon.

another—want of time; for never was I so much occupied as at present. Together with my duties as Novice Master, the Prior has imposed others of no light character. But welcome be the will of God. I try to do my best.

"We are anxiously expecting some news from Father Provincial. All the novices and postulants, as well as the other members of the community, are well. We have written on to New York for a football; and, awaiting its coming, we have covered a large bladder which gives us a great deal of excitement. We played nearly an hour today at one game, and I had to tell them to desist, they were so exhausted. We have also great times at rabbit-hunting on the days of recreation. We caught five last Thursday morning. . . . The last postulant, Brother Hyacinth (from New York), is a host at running and shouting. He says he never had such enjoyment. Please remember me in your prayers. I never needed prayers more than at present. Write soon to your loving

"Brother Hyacinth, O.P."[3]

Only a few weeks before the saintly priest's death the following letter, reminiscent of that period of his life and showing the influence he exercised over those under his training, was received from one who then profited by his spiritual guidance.[4]

". . . In January, 1868, it was my good fortune to form a friendship with the Rev. Charles H. MeKenna, O.P., which has lasted ever since. To me he has always been simply Father Hyacinth. When I first knew him, he had been ordained only a short time, and was sub-Master of Novices at the Convent of St. Rose, in Kentucky. A few months later he became Master of Novices. For two years I was intimately associated with him and learned to love him as a most saintly man. There was something severe about him, but it did not at all make him for-

[3] In the archives of the Dominican College, Washington.

[4] Thomas E. McArdle, Washington, D. C., January 2, 1917.

bidding. In fact, I should call him most lovable. Nor did his piety dull his keen sense of humor or prevent him from enjoying an innocent joke. He would laugh heartily at that which was amusing; but instantly that his laughter ceased, his countenance resumed the serious aspect so characteristic of him. I could relate anecdotes of him which might give some insight into his character, as I saw it, but they were of such an intimate nature as to cause me to refrain.

"His piety was known to all who were thrown into contact with him. To me, I may say, were given special opportunities to learn how deeply ascetic he really was. Father McKenna's spiritual reading and his meditations were such as to raise him to the heights of love and to give him an exalted knowledge of the interior life of the soul. He brought his body thoroughly into subjection that his spirit might have a closer relationship with God. He was my confessor and director, and all the knowledge I have of the spiritual life I learned at his feet. I have known many holy men, but to me Father McKenna's interior life appeared to be the most wonderful and extraordinary that I have ever met with. Father Hyacinth and I have remained fast friends all these many years; nor have I ever lost my great admiration for his holiness or for his uniform kindness. Always a true son of St. Dominic, he became in time a most eloquent preacher, as well as a great missionary. The good that he has done in the pulpit and through the confessional none but God knows. Another extraordinary thing in this saintly priest's life is the great number of vocations he has detected and been the means of leading to their fulfillment.

"All things considered, I doubt if the United States has had another priest whose zeal and labors have been a stronger influence for the good of the Church than those of Father Hyacinth. And I have sometimes been tempted to fancy that his was in a large measure due to his consuming devotion to the Mother of God. His love for our Blessed Lady was really most beautiful. His every thought, word and deed he placed in her hands; every

merit accruing from any act of religion, from a pious aspiration to the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he gave to her to do with as she pleased. He was a friend worth having."

But here we must digress from our subject to lay before the reader the trend of the young priest's thoughts at this period, and the influences that were brought to bear in the shaping of his future life. No apology, it seems to the writer, is demanded for this; for the biography that passes over the things that enter into a man's life and contribute strongly to the formation of his character must needs be imperfect, if not soulless and without interest.

Until the twelfth century the religious orders were wholly contemplative. Hidden away in mountain fastness or desert solitude, or shut up within their cloistered walls, the early cenobites led lives of complete isolation from the world. Their retreats or monasteries were mostly in places remote from the habitation of man. There they prayed, watched and fasted, toiled in the fields or studied in the scriptorium. So lived the monks of old, whose great communities were composed of people drawn from every walk of life. Among them were men of deep learning. Most of them, however, were what today we would call lay brothers, that is, persons not intended for clerical orders, and recruited chiefly from among the poor and the tradespeople. In times of heresy or some calamity threatening the Church, or at the command of popes, it is true, those of learning came forth from their seclusion and did noble work in the cause of Christ. But this was an exception to their rule (*praeter legem*), not a part of it. Their place, according to the rule and spirit of their institutes, was in their solitude or monastery.

When, in the thirteenth century, Saint Dominic founded the Order that bears his name, he departed from this beaten path. Close study of the world of his day, with which chance had brought him into intimate contact, told him that the Church had need of a religious order which would not be merely contemplative; that is, of an order which to the contemplative spirit of prayer and meditation would join, not merely the liberty, but a constitutional obligation to do unceasing battle in the sacred cause of Christ. In the mind of the saint, the good of religion demanded the creation of a body of learned and zealous men free from all bonds that would confine their activities to the limits of one diocese, or even of one country, that thus they might be at liberty to go whereso the call of duty or authority should direct them in the cause of Christ and His Church.

To meet the needs of his day—and who will deny that they are also the needs of our own times?—the chivalrous and saintly thaumaturge of Caleruega founded an Order of men which happily combines the active life with the contemplative: that is to say, to the meditative life of the cloistered monk it unites that of the energetic apostle in the open arena of the world. In the plan of Dominic, however, the latter, rather than the former, is to be the predominant feature of his Order. The members of the institute, in addition to being deeply spiritual men, given to prayer, study and contemplation, are to be men actively engaged in the restoration of all things in Christ. By prayer and meditation, choral exercises and observance of the rule they are to sanctify themselves; by long serious study they are to become profoundly learned in sacred

science. All this is to be done in the quiet solitude of the cloister; all is to be a means to an end, a preparation for the real work of the Order—salvation of souls. The brethren, when thus duly prepared, are to go forth to instruct the people by both word and example; to teach and preach the great truths which they themselves have already learned through hard, prolonged study in the solitude of their cells.

Such, in fact, was the life led by Saint Dominic himself; such the gradation he established in his Order. The spirit and end of the institute have found expression in its canonical title: "Order of Preachers"; in the motto of its escutcheon: *"Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare"* (To Praise, To Bless and To Preach); in the letters patent of Honorius III to Saint Dominic, confirming the Order and determining its special vocation: "Expecting the brethren of your Order to be champions of the Faith and true lights of the world, We confirm your Order. . . ." The same pontiff, in a second letter to the saint (written, it is said, at the request of Dominic himself), practically gives the Order its title in these words: "Honorius, Bishop and Servant of the servants of God, to our dearly beloved sons the Prior and the Brethren of Saint Romanus, *Preachers* in the country about Toulouse. . . ." In language yet more explicit, the constitutions of the Friars Preacher tell us: ". . . Our Order was instituted principally for preaching and for the salvation of souls; and our main efforts should be put forth, earnestly and ardently, in doing good to the souls of our fellow men. . . ." They emphatically declare that the Order of Preachers "was established from its beginning principally, essentially and expressly for teach-

ing and preaching, for giving to others the fruits of study and contemplation, and for the salvation of souls."

Thus we see that the great end which Saint Dominic held out to his brethren is the salvation of souls. The special means to this end are preaching and teaching. This aim of the institute, in short, has determined or regulated much of its legislation. Perhaps no law has been more strongly insisted upon than that which requires the brethren to employ in serious study the time not given to the active ministry or to the school, that their labors may become more and more fruitful. To give the priests more leisure for such a preparation for the apostolate of Christian truth, manual labor was suppressed at a very early date among the clerics, and relegated to the lay brothers. The Order of Preachers was the first to take such a step. Again, that the learned element might predominate in the Order, to preserve its prestige and high standard of learning, the number of lay brothers was limited to the needs of each house.

Preaching and teaching, then, or the diffusion of Christian doctrine, whether from the public rostrum or from the scholastic chair, should be the dominant feature in the life of the Friar Preacher. His vocation demands that he spread sound doctrine in all its phases; that he devote his energies to preaching in all its varied forms—plainly to the plain, learnedly to the learned, to all in the way best adapted to their needs; that he defend the Catholic faith and uphold the Church in season and out of season; that he labor to bring the strayed back into the fold, to convince and

convert the unbeliever, to make the good better, to instruct the untutored and to advance the enlightened still more in the knowledge of God. A Dominican, therefore, must not rest content with an ordinary acquaintance with the simple elements of Catholic teaching. He must be well grounded in philosophy; he must possess a deep knowledge of theology; he must be versed in the Scriptures and ecclesiastical history. All this was foreseen in the early days of the Order, and to meet these needs effective means were provided in its long course of ecclesiastical studies.

Yet in the background of this active apostolate for souls the spirit of the contemplative life and conventual observance must not only be fostered, but kept keenly alive. The practice of the virtues of the cloister is necessary to impart life, tone and fruit to the friar's apostolic work. Contemplation is the source at which the apostolate must be nourished. As, therefore, it is a serious error to lose sight of the active side of the Order, or to consider it as something exceptional or merely accidental and less perfect than contemplation; so it is a no less serious mistake to imagine that one can, in accordance with the spirit of the institute, give oneself up to a feverish activity, forgetting contemplation and conventual observances. As the Order is consecrated to salvation of souls through an earnest apostolate, but withal through those virtues that are born and bred within cloistered walls—whence the brethren should come forth for their ministry, as Christ from Nazareth,—prayer and meditation, preaching and zealous external activity, must go hand in hand in the exercise of its vocation. Yet, if either feature of its

life has at times to be sacrificed, it must be the contemplative rather than the active.[5]

Admittedly, one of the best exponents of this twofold life of a Dominican the Order has had in the past century, was the illustrious Frenchman, Père Lacordaire. By a happy combination of these two elements, together with his own magnetic personality, he restored the Order of Preachers in his native country, fifty years after it had been destroyed by the French Revolution, in a manner almost as phenomenal as was its foundation by the high-minded Saint Dominic more than six hundred years before. But the French are often prone to extremes. Thus, even in the lifetime of the great orator and restorer, and while he still held the reins of authority—nay, from the very beginning of his work of restoration,—we find a number of his confrères, under the leadership of Père Jandel, later General of the Order, advocating that the fathers in France should lead a life so contemplative as to minimize the active apostolate which in reality should be the dominant feature of the life of a Friar Preacher. After the appointment of Father Jandel as Master General of the Order the movement led to the division

[5] The reader who may desire a fuller information on the spirit and the twofold life of Saint Dominic's Order is referred to *Constitutiones S. Ordinis Praedicatorum,* pp. 11–86 (Paris, 1886); Quétif-Echard, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum,* Vol. I, pp. 11 ff. (Paris, 1719); Humbertus de Romanis, *De Vita Regulari* (Berthier edition, Rome, 1889), two vols. *passim;* Mother Francis Raphael Drane's two beautiful lives of Saint Dominic; Pope, *op. cit.;* O'Connor, *Saint Dominic and the Order of Preachers,* 1916; O'Daniel, *The Friars Preacher, A Seventh Centenary Sketch,* 1917; *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Knights of Columbus edition), Vol. XII, pp. 354 ff. —article Order of Preachers, by P. Mandonnet. Father Mandonnet's article is a masterly analysis of the genius and the spirit of the Dominican life; while The Friars Preacher, A Seventh Centenary Sketch, gives an English rendition of the two bulls of the Order's confirmation and the letter of Honorius III referred to in this chapter.

of the newly re-established French Dominicans into two provinces, one of which was called the Province of France, or Paris, following the principles of Lacordaire; while the other, known as the Province of Lyons, was given over to the ideals of the ultra-contemplatives.[6]

At the time of the entrance into the Order of Father Alphonsus Bernard Chocarne, of whom mention has been made, Père Lacordaire was still superior of all the Dominicans in France. Becoming imbued with the ideas of the saintly restorer, the young priest espoused the cause of those who stood for the broader and more complete Dominican life. Chocarne's strong sympathies with Lacordaire's principles, in fact, led to his temporary departure from France and his attachment, in 1866, to the Province of Saint Joseph in the United States, where he formed an intimate friendship with the subject of our biography. The two friends frequently discussed at length the questions that then divided the fathers in France—the life, labors and principles of Lacordaire, the true ideals of the Order and its place in the Church, its prospects and the course best suited to develop it in the New World.[7]

In the summer of 1865, the Very Rev. William Dominic O'Carroll, an Irish Dominican, had been sent to America as provincial of the Province of Saint Joseph. Father O'Carroll had studied in France, where, unlike Chocarne, he had unconsciously imbibed

[6] Foisset, *Vie du R. P. Lacordaire,* Paris, 1870, Vol. II, pp. 303–355; *A Dominican Artist* (Père Besson), Philadelphia, 1870, pp. 206–237.

[7] Ollivier, *Le Père Chocarne,* Paris, 1900, pp. 92 ff., touches slightly on the cause that led to Father Chocarne's coming to the United States; while Foisset, *op. cit.,* Vol. II, pp. 345 ff., throws light on Chocarne's relations with Lacordaire. But our principal knowledge of these facts was derived from Father McKenna, who received them from Chocarne.

the ideas of Father Jandel. These ideas he sought to propagate in the United States. Nay, he seems to have been sent to America for that purpose. But from the foundation of their province the American fathers had followed, as best they could, considering their means and numbers and the circumstances of the country, the broader and fuller life of the Order so strongly upheld by Lacordaire. This mode of life they had inherited from the English province, whence the first fathers had come to the United States; and they were quite loath to exchange it for that advocated by O'Carroll, which they felt would irreparably cripple the Order's efforts for good in the great American republic, where, if in any place in the world, activity is demanded of those who would succeed. It is not surprising, therefore, that the province as a unit did not take kindly to the Irish provincial's opinions or method; or that, on the expiration of his term of office, they were suffered to die a speedy death.[8]

This divergence of ideas, as might naturally be expected from the frailty of human nature, led to occasional manifestations of temper and breaches of charity. These, however, came from the foreign rather than from the home members concerned in the controversy. The misunderstanding offers no occasion

[8] Both Fathers Jandel and O'Carroll were excellent religious, and men of strong convictions and unblemished characters. Both were severe almost to a fault and unduly given to the contemplative and conventual side of the Order's life to the detriment of the apostolic or active side, which, however, after the period of formation, should hold the first place. Neither, as is evident from their letters, understood the genius of the American republic, or were in sympathy with the spirit of its people. O'Carroll admits this, in one of his letters, as regards himself. Yet his stay of four years in the United States gave him such a liking for the active life that he offered himself for the mission of Trinidad, where he died auxiliary bishop.

for scandal or surprise. It arose from a difference of opinion on principles and methods between men equally desirous of God's glory and the welfare of the Dominican Order, but taking diverse views of the manner of attaining these ends. As long as human nature remains, such disagreements will arise from time to time, and cause a ripple on the surface in the best regulated societies and communities. They are all the more apt to arise when, as in the present instance, men of different nationalities, and consequently of different customs and habits of thought, are thrown together, and when the law itself gives play to generous impulses in opposite directions. While we have not hesitated to state the American province's position in the controversy and to give the reasons for its stand, this episode has been inserted in our biography —as we felt it must be—merely to show the influences that were brought to bear on Father McKenna at this early period of his priestly life. His conduct at that time throws much light on his staunch character.

Because of the young priest's deep piety and spirit of mortification, it was thought by the provincial that he would be disposed to espouse the views held by the fathers of Lyons and to aid in their propagation in America. This idea, in fact, had its part in Father McKenna's appointment to the position of master of novices, since it was hoped he would find in the plastic minds of the young men under his charge a suitable field for such a propaganda.

But, what with his study of the traditions of the Order, both in the Old World and the New, and of the lives and ideals of its founder and its saints—and what with his sympathies for the principles which

Lacordaire had advocated and his own province had long followed in America, the future missionary was convinced that a happy combination of the contemplative life with a zealous apostolate for souls was the complete and normal life of a Friar Preacher, as well as one eminently suited to the American Church and people. The boundless good for souls that resulted from the efforts of the fathers in the missionary field was an additional argument in favor of this view. All this, he felt, was doomed to be destroyed if the province ever accepted the proposed change in its mode of life.

Thus the young priest's position as master of novices was a delicate one, requiring great tact and prudence. As he lacked the age and experience necessary to give weight to his opinions, he wisely refrained from taking part in the discussion, although he did not hesitate to say that he strongly favored the ideals of Lacordaire, which he believed to be those of Saint Dominic. Continuing his study of the Order's spirit and genius, Father McKenna became still more firmly strengthened in his conviction that its life should be eminently active. With characteristic candor, yet with humility, he spoke his mind to his superior, and his honesty and fair-mindedness so won Father O'Carroll's confidence that he was left to train the young men practically according to his own ideas—a circumstance that did much to preserve the province's traditions, and even to broaden and intensify its apostolic zeal. The experience was one that helped greatly to strengthen and round out the holy man's character, to make him a zealous minister of God and a true Dominican. It stood him in good stead in his future life as a missioner and gleaner of souls.

It is a bold metaphor, yet we think it no exaggeration, to liken the love of the pious master of novices for the young men under his charge to that of a mother for her first-born. With all his zeal and energy he strove to advance them in the paths of knowledge and sanctity, to form them into good religious, to make them useful ministers of the Church, to drill them in the full and complete ideal of the Dominican life. That he might give them his whole time and soul, he soon resigned the positions of subprior of the convent and confessor to Saint Catherine's.

Although Father McKenna realized that he could accomplish much for his Order as master of novices, it was not a position to his liking, for he instinctively shunned the responsibility of office. He was convinced, too, that his calling lay elsewhere—on the missions; and he was anxious to be assigned to these. For this work, so eminently Dominican and so fruitful in good, he had felt a strong impulse from the days of his novitiate. He prayed God that it might be given him. That he might be ripe for the call, should his prayer be heard, he devoted the moments he could snatch from his many duties to preparation for the arduous labors of a missioner. But the outlook was far from promising. While he was zealous, his health was precarious. His voice was good, but he had not learned to use it to advantage. Neither in the sermons he had preached as a student nor in those of the first two years of his priesthood, had he given any proofs of the extraordinary oratorical powers with which he was gifted. His diffidence argued against rather than in favor of success in the work he so desired to perform.

As in the life of more than one great man the

REV. C. H. McKENNA AT ORDINATION.

merest accident has revealed to an unsuspecting world powers that had not so much as been dreamed of, so it was with our Friar Preacher. Brother John Benedict McLaughlin, a brilliant and exemplary clerical novice of whose future he had expected much, died in October, 1869. Father McKenna, as master of novices, was deputed to preach the funeral oration. A father's love for his son appealed to and drew forth the best that was in the good priest's heart. The sermon was a masterpiece. Gratified, yet surprised, the community saw that a man of rare gifts had risen among them—a man who, if his health were spared, was destined to become a pulpit orator of note.

In the midst of these busy days occurred what the distinguished Dominican ever afterwards called the saddest event of his life. On June 10, 1870, his much loved mother died. Father McKenna's anguish of soul was all the greater because he was unable to be with her in her last hours. In those times of direst poverty the fathers travelled but seldom, except on business or in cases of positive necessity. The writer has frequently heard the good priest say that when his mother died there was scarcely enough money in the convent of Saint Rose to pay his fare to Louisville, sixty miles away. To the day of his death he never ceased to regret his inability to see his dying parent or to be present at her funeral. But, like a good religious, he bore the heavy cross with admirable courage and doubtless with great spiritual profit.

About the time of his mother's death Father McKenna, to his great delight, was released from the position of master of novices and told to get ready for the missions. This change was in great measure due

to the outburst of eloquence over the remains of his cherished novice, Brother John B. McLaughlin. Now the zealous young friar's experience in the spiritual guidance of the novices and the sisters of Saint Catherine's was soon to be of great value to him in the direction of souls living in the world. To give him more confidence and practice in preaching, he was appointed pastor of Saint Dominic's Church in the little town of Springfield, about two miles from Saint Rose's Priory. In this new sphere he displayed the same zeal that he had shown in previous charges. The success of the sermon of which we have spoken had inspired him with confidence, and he soon gained a local reputation as a preacher. To this day his memory is cherished and his sermons spoken of by the old people of the Springfield and Saint Rose's congregations.

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY MISSIONS—SAINT VINCENT FERRER'S, NEW YORK.

(1866–1870)

As has been said, the history or the biography that gives but the bare framework of its subject without making clear the conditions and influences which impart to it life and color, must necessarily lack attractiveness to the general reader. For this reason, we shall again interrupt our narrative to give a brief account of the beginnings of the missionary labors of the Dominican fathers in the east and of the foundation of Saint Vincent Ferrer's Priory, in the city of New York, as a setting to Father McKenna's long years of fruitful work in the same part of the country.

From what has been said in the preceding chapter, it follows that the work of the missions—whether we use the term to signify the activities of the Church in spreading religious doctrine and the light of the Gospel at home or among pagan peoples abroad; or whether we accept it in the more restricted sense of parochial missions, that is, special courses of instruction and devotions designed to quicken the faith and religious practices of a parish, to convert sinners, and to bring unbelievers into the fold—falls well within the specific sphere of the Friar Preacher's labor.

From the institution of the Order to the present day the work of sowing the seed of the Gospel among the ethnic nations, of bringing back deserters from the

faith, of converting the sinner, and of vivifying the slackening religion of Catholics, has been kept well to the forefront of Dominican life. To this manifold apostolate is largely ordained the long, serious course of studies to which the young men of the institute are subjected. Every legitimate means of preaching and teaching Christ crucified has been sedulously employed by the sons of Saint Dominic, that thereby souls might be brought to God. Whether, as a Saint Hyacinth, a Blessed Ceslas or a Venerable Paul in Poland, Russia or Hungary, as a Francis Cendra in Africa, or a Las Casas, a Louis Cancer, an Anthony de Montesinos and scores of others in Latin America, a Fenwick, a Young or a Mazzuchelli in the United States, they strove by prayer, catechetical instruction and persuasive unction to bring untutored and savage tribes into the fold of Christ; whether, as a Thomas of Aquin, an Albert the Great, or a Raymond Martini, they sought by profound treatises to instruct even the learned, or to convert the infidel; whether, as a Vincent Ferrer, a Jordan of Saxony, or a Humbert de Romanis, they endeavored by fiery appeals and burning eloquence to arouse the sinner to a sense of his degradation and to repentance; or whether, as a Lacordaire, a Monsabrè, or a "Tom" Burke, they poured out their matchless oratory to restore the birthright of faith to those who had lost it, to uphold the honor of the Church, or to quicken the religious practices of Catholics—their purpose has ever been the same, the honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Owing to the scarcity of priests in the first years of the Order's establishment in the United States, the fathers were obliged to travel incessantly from place to place

to attend the widely scattered flocks under their charge. Their labor was principally that of keeping alive the spark of faith in wide areas where there were but few clergymen to administer to the spiritual needs of the people. They were missionaries in the wider sense of the word. They had not the leisure to "give missions," to use our more modern term; that is, to devote a week or more to special religious exercises for the reviving of the flagging religious spirit of one congregation. Yet we find them at an early period conducting short missions—or retreats, as they were then called. As far back as the twenties of the last century, Bishop Fenwick and his corps of five or six fathers of the Order did this kind of work with much success, even among non-Catholics, in Ohio.

It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, as far as the writer has been able to ascertain, that any religious order in the country entered into the missionary field, or upon the work of special spiritual revivals, with systematic and organized effort. The Friars Preacher were among the first. Founded and settled in remote and sparsely inhabited rural districts of Kentucky, Ohio and Wisconsin, and far removed from the great centers of population, the growth of their institute in the beginning was necessarily slow. Its colleges, novitiates and extensive country parishes taxed all its resources. But in the late fifties and early sixties we find frequent mention of the fathers giving spiritual exercises or retreats—really, short missions—in many parts of the mid-west. They did the same at places in the vicinity of their house in the National Capital.

Although the Civil War necessitated the temporary

suspension of Saint Joseph's College, in Ohio—the greater number of its students being from the south —the fathers intended reopening it as soon as the bloody struggle should come to an end. In the meantime Father William D. O'Carroll, of whom mention has been made, arrived in America as provincial. Much to the regret of the province, Father O'Carroll set himself against colleges as opposed to his ultra-contemplative idea of the religious life. He therefore closed also the college of Sinsinawa Mound, in Wisconsin, and disposed of the property. As the provincial's action put an end to educational work for the time being, the fathers of the province became anxious to engage more extensively in the missionary field which had begun to attract much attention and to be the means of great good for the Church in the east.

At this juncture—in the spring of 1866—Father Hugh P. Ralph preached in several of the churches in the city of New York, creating such an impression that Rev. Thomas Treanor, pastor of the Church of the Transfiguration, requested the Dominicans to give his congregation a mission in the ensuing fall. The mission at the Church of the Transfiguration, which was their first in the great metropolis, opened on November 11, 1866, and gave the fathers a reputation in the east as eloquent preachers and zealous missionaries. At the end of the first week, just when it had got well into swing, the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* tells us:

"The Rev. Father Treanor, Pastor of Transfiguration Church, has called the Very Rev. G. A. J. Wilson, O. P., with eight or ten other Dominican priests, to give a mission in that church. It was opened on last Sunday, and is to continue so

long as the church will remain filled at the public exercises; and so long as the confessionals are thronged. So, at least, we understand. If so, we apprehend that, for a length of time at least, this will be the most remarkable mission ever given on the continent of America. Now, at length, the challenge seems to be given to the Catholics of New York, that as many as may *wish* may go to confession—, by going to Transfiguration Church, near the foot of the Bowery. We hope the mission may continue till Christmas at least."[1]

As the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* anticipated, the mission was a pronounced success; it even caused something of a sensation in the great metropolis. People came to it not only from all parts of New York, but also from the neighboring cities. A later issue of the same paper gives us this further news of its success:

"During its progress, we adverted repeatedly to the remarkable 'Mission' exercises given by the Fathers of the Order of St. Dominic, towards the close of last year, at the Church of the Transfiguration, in this city, of which the Rev. Thomas Treanor is the honored Pastor. The Mission lasted for three weeks, or a little more, and the good it did abundantly consoled the Pastor for his efforts and his labors. During all the time there were six, and during a large part of it nine, Dominican Fathers assisting. These sat in the confessional, on an average, ten hours a day, besides giving the sermons, instructions, meditations, &c. What would otherwise appear incredible may, therefore, be understood, that these Fathers heard over sixteen thousand confessions during the Mission! . . . As to the fruits that Father Treanor has drawn from this Mission, for his parish, we notice, among other things, that the increased throng of worshippers has led him to provide a very large succursal chapel under his church. . . . The old vaulted basement has been torn down, and

[1] *Freeman's Journal,* November 17, 1866.

a chapel, airy and more spacious than the church above, is in process of construction. . . ."[2]

The report of the marvelous success of this mission spread rapidly, leading at once to requests for others both in and out of the city of New York. Before its close, the saintly Father James D. Taaffe, an Irish Dominican missionary apostolic of Lawrence, Massachusetts, came to secure a mission for the February of the following year. So also the Rev. John T. McDonnell of Haverhill, in the same state, another zealous Irish missionary apostolic of the Order of Saint Dominic, asked for one in his church of Saint Gregory immediately succeeding that of Father Taaffe.

The mission at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Lawrence, opened on February 10, 1867, and closed on March 3. That at Saint Gregory's, Haverhill, began on March 10 and lasted for one week. As they had done in New York, so in both these places the fathers aroused great enthusiasm, though they labored in the heart of Puritan Massachusetts. The *Lawrence Sentinel,* as quoted by the *Freeman's Journal* of March 16, 1867, shows how the people of that city gathered at the church "as early as three or four o'clock in the morning" to be present at the exercises of the mission. The priests were pronounced the best pulpit orators ever heard in Lawrence; the mission was attended not only from all parts of northeastern Massachusetts, but from southern New Hampshire and even from as far as Maine.

The results of the fathers' efforts at Haverhill were not less satisfactory than those at Lawrence. In both places confessions were heard from five o'clock in the

[2] *Ibid.,* February 16, 1867.

morning until eleven at night, the church was crowded all day long, and the sermons were attended by large numbers of non-Catholics, many of whom were induced to embrace the faith. But in this last connection the Rev. Canon Walsh, then pastor at Exeter, New Hampshire, writes: "the fathers made a very good, and, I think, a very wise rule, never to receive into the Church any converts during the Missions; but merely leave them time to reflect upon the important steps they are going to take. They are left in good training order till the pastor deems them worthy to have the salutary waters of regeneration poured on their devoted heads."[3]

The missions in Massachusetts were followed in quick succession by others in and around the city of New York. By far the most noteworthy of these was that given in the May of the same year at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, New York, then under the pastorship of the Rev. William Plowden Morrogh, D.D. It continued for three weeks, and in point of attendance and the number of persons approaching the sacraments far surpassed any previously given, twenty eight thousand confessions being heard. During its second week, the *Freeman's Journal* of April 20, 1867, under the caption of "The Dominicans in New York," thus describes this mission:

"The Rev. Fathers of the Order of St. Dominic are giving one of their grandest Missions at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, in fourteenth street. There are ten of these Dominican Priests hearing confessions all day long. Besides this, six or seven other Priests have lent their assistance in the same way. It is a grand sight to behold the church and its chapel all

[3] *Ibid.*, April 6, 1867.

tented with confessionals. Instructions are given at different hours, and at the same time in different places. Thus, last week, while sermons were preaching to *men only* in the church, some eighteen hundred factory girls were gathered in the chapel, listening to sermons by another of the Fathers. . . ."

The reports spread broadcast of the great results of the fathers' first missions in the east, reaching the ears of the provincial, induced him to go to New York to make a personal inspection of their labors at the Church of the Immaculate Conception. He wished to see his brethren at work and to witness a practical demonstration of the fruitfulness of apostolic activities of which he had had no experience in Europe. The unusual sight of so many thousands flocking to the confessionals and approaching the communion-rail told him clearly that here, if anywhere, was a field of activity worthy of the best traditions of his Order. But what appealed to him most strongly was the number of devout men who crowded the church and received the sacraments.

All beginnings have an interest peculiarly their own. We love to read of them; and this is all the more true when, as in the present instance, they develop into a power for good. Accordingly, the writer has not hesitated to make lengthy citations from the papers of that day, showing the method, the hardships and the abundant fruits of those early missions which both began a new era in the history of the Friars Preacher in the United States and prepared the way for the career of one who was now to attain pre-eminence in this field of apostolic labor—Rev. Charles H. McKenna. Indeed, had it not been for them, probably Father McKenna would never have become one of America's favorite missionaries.

From the entrance of the Dominicans upon the missions in the east, the distinguished convert editor of the *Freeman's Journal,* pleased with their work, advocated through the columns of his paper their establishment in New York, where one of their institute, Father Thomas Martin, had not only been a trusted adviser of Archbishop Hughes, but had done much for the diocese. While the mission at the Immaculate Conception was in progress, Rev. Thomas Treanor and Doctors William Plowden Morrogh and Edward McGlynn also took up the cause and requested Archbishop McCloskey to give the Friars Preacher a foundation in his episcopal city. The response to this appeal was an almost immediate offer of a parish in what was then the northeastern suburbs of New York. This was in the April of 1867. In June of the same year the fathers purchased the land on the east side of Lexington Avenue, extending from Sixty-fifth to Sixty-sixth Street, where now stand the church, convent and school of Saint Vincent Ferrer. In July, the Very Rev. George A. Wilson, who had been at the head of the missions, took charge of the congregation. A small frame structure that was erected at once, served as a house of prayer for the people for more than two years. But in the fall of 1869 a handsome and devotional brick church was dedicated for divine services.[4] At the same time the fathers moved from the rented house, which they previously occupied, to take possession of their new convent at the rear of the church and facing on Sixty-sixth Street.

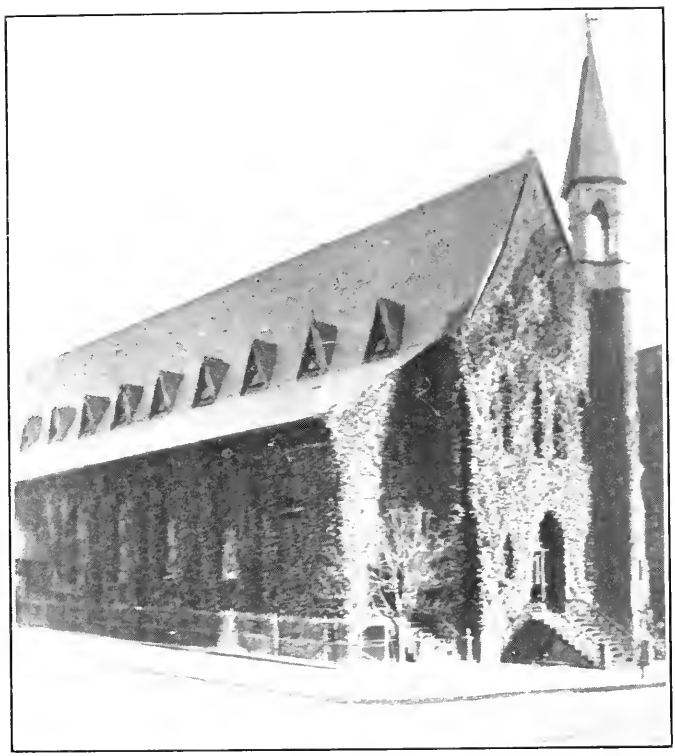
Because it had been one of the fruits of their mis-

[4] The second church of Saint Vincent Ferrer is now torn down, and the building of a newer and more stately edifice is under way.

sionary labors in the metropolis of New York, the new Dominican institution was given the name of Saint Vincent Ferrer, in honor of the great Spanish Dominican missionary. Thus, apart from its advantageous location, it was fitting that the New York house should become and remain a home for many of the fathers engaged on the missions in the east.

From this institution, as from a center, the Friars Preacher continued to give missions through all the surrounding country—especially in the large cities. Before the dedication of the second Saint Vincent Ferrer's Church this line of work had been thoroughly organized in every part of the province. Gradually the fathers extended their labors through the west and south, which led in course of time to the establishment in each of these sections of missionary bands similar to that in the east. From the beginning, these efforts were attended everywhere with much success; and it was a success that has suffered no decrease, with the exception of a brief period of about two years, when there was a temporary lull, owing to the fact that many of the men formerly thus engaged had either succumbed to the hard life, or had been placed by force of circumstances at other work.

The long hours of arduous labor on the missions—from five in the morning till eleven, or even later, at night—were a sore test for human endurance, all the more so when, as often happened, the missioners were thus engaged for many weeks without intermission. As early as 1867, Father H. P. Ralph, one of the province's most eloquent speakers and most efficient missioners, was stricken with partial paralysis under the strain. The constitutions of others also began to



SAINT VINCENT FERRER'S CHURCH, NEW YORK.

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break. This sad experience led to a gradual systematizing of the hours for confessions, so that, while ample time is afforded the faithful to confess their sins, the health of the fathers is safeguarded and their lives prolonged for service in the cause of Christ and His Church.

But the change in the hours for confessions brought no change in the character of the devotional exercises and sermons of the missions, or in the policy or method of the missioners. These remain practically the same today as they were half a century ago. Those early fathers did not preach strictly dogmatic sermons that soared above the heads of an ordinary audience. Nor, again, did they take it for granted that all that exists is bad, and Jansenistically assail imaginary evils with bitter invective. While not neglecting to paint vice in all its hideous colors and to bring home to sinners the necessity of repentance, they followed the middle way, where prudence reigns, and thus sought to create a wholesome religious sentiment and to inculcate the practice of virtue by sound Christian doctrine and earnest exhortation. Since the number of sermons was necessarily limited, they chose such subjects as were most practical and applicable to the daily lives of the people. As experience has shown the wisdom of this course, it continues to be observed today by the three missionary bands of the east, west and south.

Another principle of those early missionaries was to seek first the sheep of the fold, to the end that they might make the good better, convert the evil-doer, and bring back those who had lost their birthright of faith. Yet they did not exclude those not of the Catholic

household. All were invited to attend the missions; all were cordially received, whatever their religious convictions. Few, indeed, if any were the missions at which a largely attended catechetical class was not held for the instruction of converts. But, as the reports of their apostolic labors show, it was a strict rule that the fathers themselves should not receive their catechumens into the Church. It was felt that converts could not be properly prepared for so momentous a step in so short a time; and for this reason, with rare exceptions, they were left for further preparation under the care of the parish clergy, to whose judgment it belonged to decide when they were sufficiently instructed for baptism. These policies are still faithfully followed today. Although at the request of some pastor an occasional mission is given to non-Catholics, the province confines its activities in the missionary field almost exclusively to Catholics, for the reason that it often finds itself taxed to supply the demand for these and is convinced that its efforts are most fruitful among those of the Catholic fold.

The great world-wide Catholic devotion to the Mother of God—the Rosary—, so intimately connected with the Order of Saint Dominic, formed a conspicuous part of the early mission. Every spiritual exercise began with its recital. Twice a day a short instruction was given on its mysteries, its merits as a devotion and as a prayer, both vocal and mental, the place it should have in every Catholic household, and the way in which it should be recited. Its history was recounted, and instances were cited of how it had kept the faith alive for ages when unjust laws had banished the priests, or put them to death, or made it necessary

for the few who remained to live in hiding, unable properly to attend to the spiritual needs of their persecuted flocks.

Another society assiduously propagated by the early fathers was that of the Holy Name, which is almost as intimately connected with the Order as the Rosary, and which has been productive of incalculable good among Catholic men. At the time of which we speak, the laws of the Church forbade the erection of more than one society of the Rosary or Holy Name in any city, a restriction that greatly impeded the efforts of the fathers in this propaganda. But whenever the law permitted and the pastor so desired, both of these societies were established.

If the mission continued for two weeks, as was generally the case, the fathers sought to arrange with the pastor to devote the first to the women, the second to the men of the parish. At the close of the mission for men a pledge was given to abstain from all cursing, swearing and profane language. An experienced missionary once remarked to the writer: "It is hard to imagine a more inspiring experience than to hear a great congregation of men intoning in full, strong, earnest voice a promise to honor and revere the sacred names of God our Father and Christ our Lord." These devotions and practices, the beneficial results of which have been proved by long experience, are still observed and are part and parcel of the Dominican mission of today.

The great good that has been, and continues to be accomplished for religion by parochial missions, God alone knows. Perhaps not even the extremest enthusiast has ever dreamed of the numbers of Catholics

who have in this way been snatched from perdition, or quickened and strengthened in their faith and its practices.

Such, in brief, is the history—in the United States—, and such the nature of the spiritual work that was now to fill the days of Rev. Charles McKenna, the thread of whose life we may now continue with but few interruptions. The way had been prepared for him. How zealously he took up the work, and how fruitfully he labored at it in almost every part of the country, will be shown in the course of this biography.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN NEW YORK: ON THE MISSIONS.

(1870–1871)

WHO has not felt the pang of sorrow at the loss of a cherished friend, or the kindred pain at leaving a place that had gained a hold on one's affections? Such was now to be the experience of our future missionary. A little more than four years he had lived at the cradle of organized Dominican life in the United States, Saint Rose's Priory, Kentucky, where in October, 1806, just sixty-four years before, had been started the tender plant of Saint Dominic that had grown into a tree of fair proportions, sending its branches out over the broad land. The peaceful quiet of Saint Rose's, its historic and religious associations and the beautiful country surrounding it had a charm for Father McKenna that lasted as long as he lived. Often had he wandered over the gently undulating hills, every part of which he had grown to love almost as he loved the simple Catholic people. That the people loved him is attested by the fond memories of him that lingered in the congregation during the boyhood days of the writer. But the good priest's sadness was tempered with joy, for he felt that now he was to begin the work for which he had yearned, and for which Saint Dominic had established his Order—the salvation of souls.

On Friday, September 24, 1870, Father McKenna received from his provincial, Rev. Francis J. Dunn,

letters transferring him from Saint Rose's to Saint Vincent Ferrer's, in the city of New York. The following Sunday he bade farewell to his little congregation in Springfield, and that week left Kentucky for his new field of labor.

The New York of 1870 was not the New York of today; nor had the traveller of that period the conveniences or the luxuries to which the present generation has grown so accustomed. Leaving Saint Rose's, Wednesday, Sept. 28, 1870, the young missioner went in a farm wagon to Lebanon, eleven miles distant. Thence he travelled by train to Louisville, where he remained over night at the convent of Saint Louis Bertrand. Early the next day he began the long journey to the east, spending two nights on the train and catching what little sleep he could on the coach seat. It was high noon on Saturday when he landed from the ferry-boat at the foot of Cortlandt Street. On his arrival at the convent he had merely time to eat a hasty meal before entering the church to help with the heavy confessional work preceding Rosary Sunday. An unceremonious reception, the reader may say, for one who was to occupy a not inconspicuous place in the Catholic hall of fame in the United States. But it must be remembered that those were days of hard labor, not of ceremony.

Father Charles H. McKenna was thirty-five years of age when he was sent to New York. From that time until his death, more than forty-six years later, with the exception of three years during which he was prior in Louisville, Kentucky, and two years during which he held the same office at Saint Joseph's Priory,

Somerset, Ohio, he made his home at Saint Vincent Ferrer's.[1]

During his last two years in Kentucky Father McKenna had studied and written sermons by way of preparation for the work to which he hoped to be assigned. But to give him a practical idea of this labor, he had been appointed, before leaving the south, to assist his prior, Rev. J. H. Slinger, in hearing confessions and to follow the religious exercises at two missions of one week each at Saint Rose's and at Saint Dominic's, Springfield. His real initiation into missionary work, however, came immediately after his arrival in the east. The very day after he reached New York he was hurried to Waterbury, Connecticut, to help on a mission which the fathers were opening for the Rev. Thomas F. Hendricken, pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. As it was at this mission in Waterbury that the holy Friar Preacher began his noted apostolic career, we shall let an eyewitness tell of its results through the columns of the New York *Tablet*:

"It is no longer, thank God, an unusual thing, to hear of a Mission. Our numerous regular clergy are laboring hard in that fertile field, and great are the results brought forth. It was lately my happiness to be present at a Mission. It was my first. I will never forget it. Having heard and read much about Missions, I was prepared for much fervor among the people—many soul-stirring sermons on the part of the Missionaries. But I must confess my most fervid anticipations were surpassed. Never did I witness such proofs of lively faith, of fervent piety, as on that occasion. The mission commenced on Rosary Sun-

[1] Although Father McKenna remained assigned to the convent in Louisville from the time he was prior there until 1899, he made his home in New York because it was a more convenient center for his missionary activities.

day, October 2nd, and continued for two weeks. It was opened by Rev. Father Turner, of Saint Vincent Ferrer's, New York. He was assisted by Rev. Fathers McGovern, Byrne and McKenna of the same Order.

"From the very commencement the Mission was attended by an eager congregation. The large new church was found too small to admit all who sought to enter. At the early hour of five in the morning the church was filled with the faithful, and the writer knows of many who came as early as two o'clock in the morning, in order to get near the confessionals. Ten o'clock at night would find the confessionals still crowded, and the sexton had to be positive when the time came for closing the church. God alone knows the good that is effected at the Missions. He alone knows the conversions made to the faith, the number of those who return to the paths of rectitude, after running wild for years in the paths of vice. What was most astonishing was the large number of communicants. Early in the second week, 3000 had gone to communion. This was the number at most that Dr. Hendricken, the pastor, expected would approach, yet the crowd of penitents did not diminish. On the contrary, it hourly increased; and towards the end of the week the two vestries, where the confessionals were placed, were literally packed. The great number of communicants can be accounted for by the fact that the advent of the Missionaries to Waterbury in some measure renewed the scenes witnessed in the days of St. Vincent Ferrer. His approach to a town was a powerful attraction of grace which drew the faithful to him from every direction. For on this occasion they came by railway, in carriages, and on foot, for miles around, to attend the holy Mission. I do not know that all or any of the good Dominicans pretend to the gift of miracles; but I do know that never did I see such lively faith manifested in a people as on this occasion. Whenever a white habit was seen a crowd ran to ask a blessing or obtain some favor, and many were the prayers offered and the blessings invoked on 'the good white Fathers.' . . ."[2]

[2] *New York Tablet,* October 27, 1870.

The *Tablet's* correspondent then proceeds to describe the closing of the mission, at which, he says, not merely the church and its galleries but even the sanctuary and sacristies were filled to suffocation. And a correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal,* writing on the same subject, tells us:

"The Fathers worked in the confessional with their accustomed assiduity; and in the pulpit they seemed masters of the subjects of which they treated, as well as of the attention of their hearers. Four thousand three hundred was the number of communions. The characteristic of this mission, both on the part of the fathers and of the people, was a quiet yet resolute disposition thoroughly to perform the holy work they had undertaken. . . ."[3]

The mission at Waterbury, marking as it does an era in good Father McKenna's life, deserves a special place in his biography. It was the beginning of a long, fruitful career that is possibly without a parallel in the history of Catholic parochial missionary work in the United States.

The quiet determination to get at the root of evil and to make the people better Catholics, of which the correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal* speaks, was characteristic of all the pious friar's priestly ministrations. And the eloquence that then held the rapt attention of the good Catholics of Waterbury, was but a foreshadowing of that more sublime oratory which in years to come was to hold vast audiences spellbound. Another salient feature of this (his first) mission—unpretentious simplicity—was a characteristic of our missioner's whole life. Truly a man of God, no success, however great, ever caused him to forget that all

[3] *Freeman's Journal,* October 29, 1870.

talents are gifts from on high, and that men are but the instruments of the Almighty for the accomplishment of His purpose. Realizing that pride is the broad road that leads to all evil, while humility is the fountain whence spring virtue and true wisdom, he sought earnestly to cultivate in his soul that lowliness of spirit which would bring grace to himself and fruitfulness to his labors.

At Waterbury began an intimate friendship between the zealous young missionary and the gifted pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Rev. Thomas F. Hendricken, later the first bishop of Providence, that ended only with the bishop's death. Wherever, indeed, Father McKenna went in the performance of his duties—and that was through the length and breadth of the country—his sincerity, disinterested zeal and unpretentious piety won him the lifelong friendship of the pastors for whom he preached or gave missions. It is an old and true adage that a strong man perforce makes enemies. Our Friar Preacher was almost the exception to this rule. He had indeed many friends; but few were his enemies. A firm character, ever the priest and the gentleman, once he became your friend, he was your friend for life. Always considerate of the feelings and the needs of others, those who became his friends remained so until the end.

Nearly all the remainder of the year 1870 was spent on the missions—principally in the state of Connecticut, where the promising pulpit orator received his baptism of fire. Missions at Middletown, Saint Peter's (Hartford) and Saint Mary's (New Haven) followed closely upon that at Waterbury, and were

equally fruitful in good. In the last years of his life, when in reminiscent mood, the grand old man loved to descant on those early efforts in the Lord's vineyard. He felt that his greatest success was achieved on the mission at Hartford. Those at Middletown and New Haven, however, merit special mention, as it was at these places that he began to gain fame as an orator and missionary.

Across the Connecticut River, opposite Middletown, are the celebrated quarries of Portland brownstone, where at the period of which we speak, about one thousand men were employed. At the same time, possibly an equal number was engaged in building railroads in the city and vicinity. Nearly all these workmen were Irish Catholics. Most of them, attracted by the report of the fathers' splendid sermons, attended the mission. The presence of so many men of the laboring classes gave Father McKenna an occasion for which he had longed. His very soul was stirred, for he had himself belonged to this class of men, and had learned through sad experience their great need of spiritual aid. Before studying for the priesthood he had resolved that, if he ever attained to the dignity of an ambassador of Christ, no small part of his sacerdotal ministry should be given to the spiritual uplift of Catholic men, particularly those whose condition in life compelled them to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water." The remembrance of his own past caused his priestly heart to go out to the multitude of laboring men who attended the mission at Middletown. He poured out his zealous soul to them with all the fire of his eloquence. Many possibly came to scoff, but they remained to pray. The mission was one of the most

successful given by the fathers in those early days; and tradition tells us that to none was its success due more than to Father McKenna.

In New Haven the ever increasing crowds obliged the pastor, the Rev. E. J. O'Brien, to hire the city music hall that stood near the church to accommodate the overflow. A correspondent of the *Freeman's Journal* tell us: ". . . The sermons during the mission were remarkably practical, and evidently effectual in awakening slumbering faith and inflaming charity and repentance. In this connection, Father McKenna's sermon on the Immaculate Conception may be mentioned as in every respect worthy the ancient fame of the Dominican Order. . . . May God grant that our country may be blessed by many such missionaries."[4]

The mission in New Haven produced a sensation in the university city not unlike that caused by the first appearance of the Dominicans in New York at the Church of the Transfiguration four years before. One of its immediate results was the establishment of an intimate friendship between the fathers who conducted it and the pastor of the church. These circumstances, together with other missions given in later years for Bishop McMahon at his cathedral in Hartford, induced that distinguished prelate, in 1886, to request the Friars Preacher to take charge of the new Saint Mary's Church, New Haven.

By the beginning of 1871, although he had been a missioner but four months, our pious son of Saint Dominic was well into the swing of the apostolic life. By the close of 1871 he was acknowledged by his

[4] *Ibid.*, December 24, 1870.

brethren to be second to none in zeal, while it was seen that the day was not far distant when in sacred oratory also he would measure up with the best. That year was given largely to the city and state of New York, with occasional missions here and there through New England, and a few as far west as Ohio. Everywhere Father McKenna's zeal, eloquence, priestly deportment and courteous manners produced the most salutary effects and left lasting impressions among both clergy and people.

It is an old tradition of the Order of Preachers, dating back to its very foundation and doubtless expressive of the spirit of Saint Dominic himself, to write little of its inner life or even of its external activities. While its members have written, and written well, on almost every other subject, they have singularly neglected that which, according to the dictates of worldly wisdom, they should have been most anxious to make known to the world. The same spirit has prevailed, though not quite to the same extent, with regard to the preservation of records and documents relative to the history of the Order and its apostolic work. Historians have often complained of this indifference shown by the institute to chronicle its labors and domestic affairs; for this carelessness has often rendered it necessary for them to seek information from archives and sources other than Dominican, and in many instances has deprived the student of ecclesiastical history of important knowledge.

This same spirit, brought from Europe by the founders of the Order in the United States, became ingrained in the American fathers. Far from being gratified by the wide notoriety given their early mis-

sionary efforts in the east through the public press, it seemed to displease them, and they took steps to prevent such notices of the subsequent missions from appearing. More than once the strenuous convert editor of the *Freeman's Journal,* James J. McMaster, complained of his inability to get reports from them in regard to their apostolic work. And a correspondent of that paper writes in the same strain: "Whilst admiring their disregard for notoriety, we do not approve their withholding many things connected with their Order, which are calculated to edify and console."

The *Journal's* correspondent then proceeds to tell how, knowing that many missions had been given by the fathers, both in the east and in the west, and seeing no notices of their results published, he went to their convent in New York to seek information. He received, however, but a partial list, in brief outline, of the missions they had given in one year. Fortunately he learned enough to tell us that the number of communions given at each of these missions ranged from three thousand to eight thousand five hundred, and that the number of clergymen employed on them was from three to seven, according to the size and local importance of the parishes. The article then goes on to show how strongly the Friars Preacher insisted on the principle that converts should be thoroughly grounded in the Catholic faith before being received into the Church, and concludes with the following appreciation of their parochial labors in New York: "Their church in this city is a fine edifice, and from the number of penitents frequenting its numerous confessionals, it would seem that a continual missionary exercise was going on within its walls. May God enable

the good fathers to pursue their faithful and arduous labors."[5]

Because of the almost total lack of records, notes taken from conversations with the older fathers who were actively engaged in the apostolic labors of the province, were of much service in the composition of our biography. But of special value were data similarly jotted down after long talks with Father McKenna himself, who unconsciously supplied much matter for his own life. He long kept private records of his missions, but a search for these shows that they have disappeared.

Fruitful as was the first year of Father McKenna's labors on the missions, it was but a promise of the greater success that was to attend his efforts as he grew in experience, eloquence and reputation. Shortly after his arrival in the east, in addition to his missionary work, the zealous young priest was given charge of the Holy Name Society of Saint Vincent Ferrer's Church, New York. But of his interest in this society we shall have to speak frequently in the course of his life.

[5] *Ibid.*, July 15, 1871.

CHAPTER IX.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE: SICKNESS.

(1871–1873)

FATHER MCKENNA had not been long on the missions when he realized that lectures on practical Catholic or religious topics, particularly those that occupied the public mind at the time, were not only of keen interest but most instructive and profitable to those of the faith. Accordingly, we find him engaged in this work also before the close of the first year of his missionary labors.

The fathers were required by rule to return to their convent immediately after each mission, unless another was to begin at once. To deviate from this law a special permission was necessary in every instance. When Father Burke arrived in America, our friar was engaged on a mission at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Salem, Massachusetts. At its close the pastor, Rev. William Hally, requested him to lecture on the following Thursday on the "Confessional, or the Power of the Church to forgive Sins." As there was not time to write, Father McKenna telegraphed for permission to remain for that purpose, and sent a warm welcome to Father "Tom" Burke who had just arrived in the country to make a visitation of the province. This was one of his earliest lectures, and it met with much applause.

Other topics on which he began to lecture at this time, or a little later, were the "Divinity of the Catho-

lic Church"; the "Immaculate Conception," a doctrine that was defined only in 1854 as belonging to revealed truth; the "Real Presence"; "Saint Patrick and His Mission in Ireland"; "Papal Infallibility," a subject that was uppermost in the public thought of that period. Although to a Catholic of today it would seem there could never have been much room for doubt, papal infallibility was not declared a part of the sacred deposit of faith until in the July of 1870, less than three months before Father McKenna began his life as a missioner. Its *ex cathedra* definition caused an immense stir in the world, giving rise to much discussion. This, therefore, was a topic on which he was frequently asked to lecture. Soon he acquired the reputation of being a lecturer of note. At almost every one of his subsequent missions his services were demanded in this line, and everywhere he drew large audiences.

One exception, however, must be recorded. It was an attempt at a lecture on Saint Patrick in the theater at Poughkeepsie, New York, given under the auspices of Saint Peter's Church, March 17, 1871. As the invitation to lecture was received only a week before Saint Patrick's Day and he had never attempted anything in that line, Father McKenna accepted it only under obedience. Kept busy with pastoral and other work, he had time merely to prepare the foreword and to gather a few notes. These he hoped to throw into shape after his arrival at Poughkeepsie, where he was to arrive on the evening of March 16. The clergyman in temporary charge of the church was an Italian, but the congregation was composed almost wholly of Irish or those of Irish parentage. The son of sunny Italy, so the story goes,

anxious to win the favor of the people, had resolved to outdo all previous Saint Patrick's Day celebrations.

Thus when Father McKenna arrived in Poughkeepsie, he found that the program for the event had been posted not merely through the city, but the surrounding country. It included a solemn mass, a grand parade, a meeting of the parish, a banquet, and "a lecture on Saint Patrick by an eloquent Dominican missionary." As the good pastor insisted that the speaker take part in every feature of the program, which filled the entire day, there was no time left for study. No pleading of Father McKenna for a chance for further preparation and the marshalling of his notes would be accepted. The zealous friar prayed for an inspiration that came not. The thought of having to lecture in his unprepared state filled him with alarm. All went well, however, until the time for the address. The orator of the day appeared on the boards. The foreword of the lecture, which had been prepared, was delivered with fluency and met with frequent interruptions of applause from the audience. But when this was finished, there came a hush. The orator was completely overcome by stage-fright. A few disconnected sentences that ended with: "Ladies and gentlemen, I can say no more," finished the discourse. The young missioner then disappeared from the stage, utterly dismayed and deeply mortified. Although at the time Father McKenna was humbled beyond expression, in later years he delighted to tell the story on himself, characterizing the episode as his "first appearance on the stage."

Possibly it was a fortunate circumstance that this incident came thus early in Father McKenna's life as

a public speaker. Though he failed through no fault of his own, it was a lesson which he never forgot. It was the last time he attempted a sermon or a lecture without thorough immediate preparation, until he had attained an efficiency that made this no longer necessary. Needless to say, too, this was the only occasion in his long public career on which the distinguished Dominican's oratory did not satisfy the most sanguine expectations of his audience.

The incident at Poughkeepsie, amusing as it is, at once recalls and illustrates the character of our Friar Preacher's piety. Although he was truly a man of God, and much given to prayer and severe mortification, his deep Christian piety had nothing morose or repellent about it. When it was time to pray, he prayed with all his soul; when it was time to work, he did so with all his energy. No one enjoyed intervals of recreation more thoroughly. He was blessed with a fund of native Irish wit and with an appreciative sense of humor. He was always cheerful, could himself laugh heartily, and enjoyed the merry laughter of others. While he could not tolerate anything that approached the vulgar, he delighted in telling an interesting story and listened with undisguised pleasure to those narrated by his companions. His piety, in short, was that born of love rather than that inspired by fear. It was such a piety as must have been that of Saint Dominic, whose lightsome spirit is said to have caused him to be given the sobriquet of "*joculator Domini*" (the Lord's jester). Father McKenna's life is proof positive that great sanctity of soul is not incompatible with a genial disposition.

The year 1872 was one of much hard work for our

missionary. Fortunately most of his missions were in the east, a circumstance that gave him frequent opportunities to hear his ideal orator, Father "Tom" Burke, deliver many of his finest sermons and lectures, and thus to study the great Dominican at first-hand. It was a remarkable thing, indeed, to hear Father McKenna complain of having too much work to do. Yet he ever regretted not having been freer during Father Burke's brief sojourn in the United States, that thus he might have heard more of his preaching and lecturing. But of this in the next chapter.

Father McKenna's zeal, even at this early period of his priestly life, was not confined to his lectures or his missionary labors. As has been seen, his hard experience as a common laborer had taught him a sad but fruitful lesson and had left a lasting impression on his mind. It was then that he learned from close observation the necessity of reaching men in the world, especially men of the working class. His experience in the priesthood soon taught him that no devotion seemed to make so strong or so direct an appeal to Catholic men as the old Dominican devotion of the Holy Name; that no society seemed to bind men so effectively together in their respective parishes as the society of the same name. Accordingly, he preached the Holy Name in season and out of season. Wherever he went, he advised the pastor, if the law permitted, to establish this society in his church. Whenever he could, he established it on his missions. But he felt that the churches of his own Order, under whose special protection his cherished society had been placed by the Holy See, should be an example to all others in fostering a devotion at once so Christian and so singu-

larly suited to Catholic men. For this reason, Father McKenna spent much of his time when at home, in the advancement of the Holy Name Society in the parish of Saint Vincent Ferrer, New York, of which he had been appointed spiritual director—a position that he held until his election, nearly eight years later, as prior of the convent of Saint Louis Bertrand, Louisville, Kentucky.

Possibly because of his practical knowledge of the world, it did not take the zealous priest long to realize the need of a manual of prayer specially designed for men of the Holy Name. To fill this want he compiled our present well known English *Manual of the Holy Name,* the first edition appearing late in 1871. Another lesson taught him by his intimate contact with the world was that such a manual should be written in the simplest language, that it might be well within the mental grasp of untutored workmen, the class that formed then so large a proportion of the Catholic population of the United States. That the little book of devotion met the need and filled the mission for which it was intended, is shown by the many editions through which it has passed and the hundreds of thousands that have been printed. Doubtless the earnest friar himself had no idea of the immense good accomplished by his unpretentious little volume until he was called to receive his eternal reward.

Such were the beginnings, humble in their way, of Father McKenna's long continued labors in the cause of the Holy Name Society—labors that were to win for him the richly deserved title of "Apostle of the Holy Name in the United States." But of these we shall speak later. Suffice it to say here that no one re-

gretted more than Father McKenna the Church's restrictive legislation with regard to his beloved society of which we have spoken, and which hindered the province's efforts in the noble cause. He determined, therefore, to leave nothing undone to obtain a dispensation for America.

A true Dominican, Father McKenna was keenly interested in the special devotions of his Order. A tender love for the Blessed Virgin was a striking trait of his life. Her cause, he felt, should go hand in hand with that of her Divine Son, and he was indefatigable in its promotion. Thus shortly after the appearance of the *Manual of the Holy Name,* his zeal for the furtherance of *the* great prayer and devotion to the Mother of God led him to publish *The Rosary, The Crown of Mary*—a little book which has brought spiritual blessings to thousands of American homes. The same practical wisdom, the same knowledge of the needs of Catholics in the world, the same simplicity of language that have made the *Manual of the Holy Name* so popular also characterize this devotional work. Here, as in all things else, its author labored not for personal glory, but for the honor of God and His blessed Mother—for the greater good of the greater number of souls. *The Rosary, The Crown of Mary,* because of its wider field, met with greater success and has passed through more editions than even the *Holy Name Manual.*

In all his devotional and confraternity manuals the good priest sought simplicity rather than style; his aim was the salvation of souls, not the attainment of a reputation in English literature. His modesty, in fact, was such that he could not bring himself to sign his name

to them. If, as the Scriptures assure us, "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh," surely the spirit of love and religion that exhales from these little volumes argues a fund of piety in the soul of their author.

Every man, however gifted, has his limits. If he has too many irons in the fire, some of them must be spoiled; some of his enterprises are doomed to failure. So it was with our zealous Friar Preacher. Yet this very fact argues in his favor rather than militates against his reputation. The man who makes no mistakes is a man who attempts nothing, and therefore accomplishes nothing. The life that has had no failures has itself been a complete disaster. Far better is it to attempt many things, and to fail in some, than to undertake nothing through sheer fear of failure.

Father McKenna's early priestly zeal, because all-consuming, was many-sided. Besides his missionary labors, his work in the lecture field and his endeavors in behalf of the devotions and societies of the Holy Name, the Rosary and the secular Third Order of Saint Dominic, upon some of which we have touched, we find him as far back as 1871 planning to build a church for the colored Catholics in the city of New York and to establish a community of Dominican Sisters devoted to both spiritual and corporal works of mercy among the poor in the great American metropolis. But we cannot do better than to let the hard-working priest give his own account of these two pious enterprises:

"It was in the early days of my priesthood in Kentucky [he says] that I began to be interested in the colored race, as it was there that I had my first experience with this people. The col-

ored members of St. Rose's parish were good, practical Catholics. For a few months before my departure from St. Rose's, in 1870, I had charge of St. Dominic's Church at Springfield. While pastor of this place it was my custom to preach to the people twice every Sunday—at Mass in the morning, and at vespers in the afternoon. There also the lately liberated slaves, who formed nearly half of the congregation, were as faithful as their white brethren in attending church and in frequenting the sacraments. Some of them, indeed, proved to be really saintly and much given to prayer. Almost without exception they manifested a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother of God.

"Late in September, 1870, the Provincial, Very Rev. F. J. Dunn, sent me from St. Rose's to St. Vincent Ferrer's, New York, to become one of the missionaries in the east. In New York the recollection of my good colored Catholics in Kentucky led me, when not away on the missions, to inquire about the Catholics of the same race in the great metropolis. In this way I found they had no church of their own in the city. Nor was there, as far as I could learn, any priest specially appointed to look after their spiritual interests. It then occurred to me that perhaps by building a church for them in the part of the city where they principally lived, and by giving them my services, I could do more good than in any other field of labor. All this, of course, was to be dependent on the sanction of my superiors. To learn the feasibility of the project before proposing it to competent authority, I spoke of it to several colored Catholics. They appeared to be delighted with the idea of having a church specially for their race; for, as they said, many of their people were forsaking the faith simply because they had no church of their own and no priest whose particular duty it was to look after their spiritual welfare. They told me that there were several clergymen in the city who took a keen interest in the colored Catholics, but who, because of their other duties, could not give sufficient time to this work. Among others were mentioned the names of Doctors McGlynn and Burtsell and Father Thomas

Farrell, pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Sixth Avenue and Washington Place. I then visited these three clergymen to get their views in regard to a separate and distinct church in the city for the descendants of Ham. All three warmly approved the project, and each promised to contribute one thousand dollars towards the building as soon as its success was assured. Archbishop McCloskey, later our first Cardinal, also gave the undertaking his cordial sanction.

"One colored gentleman, however, whom I was advised to visit, held views on the plan quite different from those of his fellow Africans. He was a Catholic, principal of a school near St. Stephen's Church, and influential among his people. He received me courteously. But when he learned that the object of my visit was to solicit his co-operation in the enterprise of which I have spoken, he showed a decided opposition to such a step. A separate and distinct church for those of his race, he stoutly maintained, would tend to keep the whites and the blacks apart, an evil, he said, with which he would have nothing to do. He declared that the Church should seek to unite the two races, rather than lend a hand to perpetuating their separation.

"Although I did not advert to it until the project was laid before my superiors, a second thought would have told me that in those days of much missionary and other work and few priests, they would hardly be able to spare my services for such a purpose. While the fathers felt the idea was a good one, they could not see their way to let me take up the work at that time. In fact, I was nearly always on the missions and away from New York. I did not, however, cease to cherish the hope that some day the charge of the colored Catholics of New York would be given to me until a few years later, when Rev. John E. Burke was appointed to work among them along the same lines I had mapped out for myself. Doubtless Father Burke's pronounced success shows that the enterprise fell into more capable hands than mine; yet his success proves the idea to have been feasible. In later years I had the pleasure of giving a mission for colored people in his church on Bleecker Street.

"Such, in sum and substance, are my recollections of my early endeavor to establish a church for the colored Catholics in the city of New York."[1]

Although they progressed a little farther, the good priest's zealous efforts to establish a community of Dominican Sisters in New York, whose lives should be devoted to the aid of the poor, met with no better success than did his attempt to form a congregation and to build a church for the colored Catholics of that city. Of this pious project Father McKenna says:

"During occasional intervals between missions, my superior sometimes sent me to collect money for the beautiful paintings on the sanctuary walls and the ceiling of St. Vincent Ferrer's Church. The wretched poverty that I saw in the homes of many of our people on my visits from house to house made a strong appeal to my sympathies. It appeared to me that a community of our Third Order of Dominican Sisters, whose vocation would be to visit and take care of the sick poor, to conduct a day nursery where mothers compelled to labor for the support of their families could leave their little ones while at work, and to instruct the children of such parents, would be an untold blessing to the great city. No act of charity, it seemed to me, that one could do would be more acceptable to God. Accordingly I resolved, if permitted, to form such a community of devoted women. Their work was to be practically the same as that which the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor, West Sixty-first Street, are now doing with so much success.

"The project was proposed to Father Tom Burke, then visitor to the province. Father Burke warmly approved it. Four

[1] This account of his efforts to establish a congregation of colored Catholics in New York, together with that of his attempt to found a community of Dominican Sisters for the sick poor in that city, was given the writer some years ago by Father McKenna as a matter of Dominican history. Father Burke is now Monsignor Burke and Director General of the Catholic Board for Work among Colored People.

exemplary Catholic ladies of mature age, one of whom had considerable means, offered to devote their lives to the good work; and the late Thomas Crimmins, a model Christian gentleman, tendered a house for their temporary use, promising, if the pious adventure proved a success, to make them a donation of both the building and the ground on which it stood. As this seemed to insure the outcome of the undertaking, it was submitted to Archbishop McCloskey. The saintly prelate gave it not only his ready sanction, but his blessing, with the remark that such an institution could not fail to do much good in his episcopal city. The little community of Dominican Sisters of the Poor then came into existence, and commenced its work on a small scale. But its life was of short duration. Difficulties that could not be foreseen arose and could not be overcome, and the infant community ceased to be. The time, I suppose, was not ripe for such an institution, or God wished to punish me for my sins."[2]

Father McKenna's absence from New York on his apostolic work was largely responsible for the dissolution of the little community of sisters he had started. As God did not perform a miracle to enable the zealous priest to be in many places at once, he could not be both on the missions and in the great metropolis to look after the welfare of his infant branch of the Third Order of Saint Dominic. So it failed. Yet that the friar's zeal ran along sane and practical lines in both these pious enterprises is shown by the later success of others in the same kind of work. No doubt our missioner found a source of consolation in thus realizing that his plans were feasible, in spite of his own failure to carry them out. Likely, indeed, his efforts were father to similar ideas in the minds of others—ideas that have since borne rich fruits. Of a broad, magnanimous spirit, he took a keen delight in

[2] See preceding note.

the work of Monsignor Burke and in that of the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor.

While, under some aspect, every failure is matter for regret, one cannot but rejoice that Father McKenna did not succeed in the two enterprises of which we have spoken. Resolute, energetic and generous as he was, he could never have given them the attention necessary for their welfare without curtailing, if not wholly abandoning, his activities in the vastly wider and more useful field of labor in which he accomplished so much for the Church of America and for the salvation of souls.

We must now retrace our steps for a moment to take up the thread of Father McKenna's career as a missioner, where it was left off to give a further insight into the good priest's deep spiritual life and a passing acquaintance with his zealous efforts along other lines of apostolic endeavor.

But, not to tire the patience of the reader with frequent repetitions, we shall refer to only a few of the many missions in which he took part, accounts of which, in spite of efforts to prevent it, found their way into the Catholic papers of the day, and show the zealous priest's busy life, as well as the success with which he met everywhere in the exercise of his divine vocation. The *milieu* in which he labored was helpful and inspiring; for noticeable features of all these early Dominican missions are the great crowds that attended them, the fervor of the people, the numbers that approached the sacraments, the universal satisfaction the fathers gave the pastors for whom they labored.

We have seen how the year 1872 was spent by Father McKenna. Two of the missions in which he

took part towards the end of the year, and of which he used to speak as the source of much consolation to him, were those given during September and October, for his friend, Rev. William J. Lane, at Green Point, Long Island, and for Rev. James Lynch at Middletown, Connecticut.

With the exception of a few weeks after the Christmas holidays, the early part of 1873 was spent between New England and the city and state of New York, at that time the principal field of the apostolic labors of the Friars Preacher in the east. Father McKenna's most remarkable mission at this epoch, however, was that given for Rev. Robert J. McGuire at Saint Paul's, Brooklyn, from March 23 to April 6. As was generally the case at Saint Paul's, a noticeable feature of the mission was the preponderance of men attending it. Many were the wayward Catholics reconciled with their Divine Master, and numerous the converts brought into the Church. The *Freeman's Journal* again tells us that "it would seem that, through the ministry of the white-robed children of St. Dominic, the Angel of Peace and Reconciliation between God and man had been invoked upon this part of Brooklyn."[3]

Because of the great number of men belonging to Saint Paul's parish, Father McKenna was always anxious to be, and usually was, one of the number delegated to conduct the annual mission long given by the Dominicans in that church. He was more at home among those of his own sex, and therefore at his best when preaching to them. Thus, as Father McGuire's preferences ran along the same lines, our friar soon became a favorite with the pastor of Saint Paul's

[3] *Freeman's Journal*, June 7, 1873.

Church and a large part of the congregation. And there are reasons for believing that the extraordinary results of this mission were in no small measure due to Father McKenna's efforts.

The truth of the homely old adage, "All work and no play does not pay" was now to be experienced by our untiring missioner. The health of a number of the fathers had given way under the terrific strain of the missions before the hours of confessional work were wisely regulated. Father McKenna, however, had to learn his lesson of wisdom through personal experience. While he scrupulously observed the rule with regard to the time for hearing confessions—for with him the will of his superiors was always law—his love of work, his laudable ambition to improve himself, and his zeal to help souls impelled him, whether at home or abroad, to set nature's law of rest at naught. What with the missions, the writing of sermons, lectures and books of devotion—and what with his efforts to spread the societies of the Holy Name and the Rosary, and his study for self-improvement, the missionary's physical constitution was again gradually undermined. For more than three months prior to the breakdown of which we have now to speak, he had had scarcely a day that he could call his own. At Saint John's, Utica, where he aided on a mission in late April and early May, he contracted a severe cold, but continued at his work. At Saint Patrick's, Troy, where he went from Utica and where his labors were the greater because one of his two companions was not a preacher, his cold grew worse, and it was with great difficulty he remained at his post. At the close of the mission there, pneumonia developed, bringing him to death's door.

After Father McKenna's recovery from this illness he suffered from a continual and severe pain in the head, which the physicians pronounced incipient paresis, induced by overwork. His condition, they said, was beyond medical aid; his recovery a matter of grave doubt. It was thought, indeed, that the days of his zealous labors were at an end. In the hope that his health might be restored and his life prolonged for the good of the Church in America, his superiors and friends urged the sufferer to go on a pilgrimage to the grotto of Lourdes which had become noted for its miraculous cures. The Holy Name men of Saint Vincent Ferrer's parish, as a token of their gratitude for the missionary's zealous efforts in their behalf, made up a purse to defray the expenses of the journey. Quietly and unostentatiously, as was his custom, he sailed towards the end of June for Queenstown, Ireland.

Not to tempt providence in its ruling of the world by the laws of nature, Father McKenna, as a theologian, thought it his duty to test once more the skill of man before appealing to divine aid for a miraculous cure of his ailment. But, like the physicians of America, those of Ireland told him that he was a victim of incipient paresis and that they could do nothing for him. As a last resort our humble friar then continued his journey to southern France. In Father McKenna were joined considerable learning and the simple faith of a Breton peasant or a Catholic Irish farmer—the faith that has elicited the most striking wonders of Lourdes. May we not then believe that his permanent cure was a reward for this childlike faith? As the writer has

often heard him say, he was in constant torture through all his long journey up to the moment he knelt in fervent prayer for relief at the shrine of our Blessed Lady of Lourdes. The pain then ceased and was never felt again.

Father McKenna, needless to say, was deeply grateful for the cure he had received, which, in his simple faith, he firmly believed to the day of his death to be miraculous. He remained for a week at Lourdes, spending most of the day at the grotto of the Blessed Virgin in heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving for his recovery, and to satisfy his rare personal devotion to the Mother of God. He used to say that this was one of the happiest weeks of his life.

From France our missioner returned to his native land to visit his eldest brother, who still lived at the old homestead at Fallalea, and whom he had not seen since he left Ireland twenty-two years before. At Fallalea he spent some time in visiting friends and relatives, and in reviewing the scenes of his boyhood days. In the little chapel at Glen he preached on several occasions, doubtless causing a sensation among the simple country folk by his eloquence, as well as a sentiment of pride in those of his kindred. He also preached in Belfast, Dublin, Cork and other places. Everywhere he did his best to uphold in the Old World the glory of the Church and his Order in the New. That he succeeded those of us who knew him as a pulpit orator cannot doubt.

When our apostolic friar returned to America in the fall of 1873, he was in the best of health. As he believed that the Blessed Virgin, through the intercession of the little shepherdess Bernadette, had procured

for him not only this blessing, but strength to continue his arduous labors in the cause of religion, he felt that in simple gratitude, apart from the promptings of his own zeal, he should lose no time in getting back into harness. Accordingly, he had no sooner landed in New York than we find him busily engaged in giving missions, in the apostolates of the Holy Name and the Rosary societies, and in lecturing for the instruction of the faithful. He had, however, learned the wisdom of not unduly taxing either mind or body, but it was a lesson that he sometimes forgot.

To follow the missionary in his labors through the rest of the year 1873 were but to repeat what has already been placed before the reader. But another fact belonging to this time deserves notice here. Father McKenna, with his keen appreciation of the needs of people in the world, realized that still another religious manual was needed in the work of the missions. Prior to his illness he had done something in filling this want. One of his first cares, therefore, on his return from abroad, was to publish *How to make the Mission,* a book that gained an immediate and great popularity which remains undiminished after a lapse of more than forty years. To this day it is not unusual for pastors to dispose of a thousand or more copies of it at one mission.

Like the other devotional works from the pious priest's pen, *How to make the Mission* made no pretense to literary excellence; his sole object was to reach humble people in a simple way and to bring them nearer to God. Of all Father McKenna's practical spiritual writings *How to make the Mission,* although intended merely as an aid to persons making a mis-

sion and wishing to gain its fullest fruits, possibly holds the first place in the good that it has effected.[4]

We have spoken of these unpretentious works in such minute detail because, to the mind of the writer, they can hardly be over-emphasized in the life of a priest of Father McKenna's character. They show the depth of his piety, his zeal and the goodness of his heart which caused him ever to seek to aid his fellow-man.

[4] The Sulpician theologian, Father Tanquerey, recommends *How to Make the Mission* for those who need or wish to make a general confession. See *Synopsis Theologiae Generalis* (1908), Vol. I, p. 203.

CHAPTER X.

INFLUENCE OF FATHER "TOM" BURKE.

(1871–1873)

THE period from October, 1871, to February, 1873, was a period of magnificent opportunity for Father McKenna—one of which he was not slow to take advantage. Coming as it did at a most seasonable time (in the early years of his life as a missioner and public speaker, and when experience had taught him how to study it with profit), he derived from it great and lasting benefits. This was the presence in the country of the illustrious Irish Dominican, Father "Tom" Burke. But to give the reader a clear idea of the influence exercised on our friar by Father Burke demands a brief word on the great orator's mission and labors in the United States.

The constitution of the Friars Preacher ordain that their Masters General should make, or cause to be made, from time to time a visit of inspection to the various provinces of the Order. This visit is supposed to be made to each province at least once during the term of office of every Father General—twelve years. The General himself, should if possible, perform this onerous duty. But if unable to do it personally, or if for any good reason he deems it expedient, he may delegate another member of the Order to act in his name and with his authority. Prior to the period of which we speak, however, only one such visitation of the Province of Saint Joseph had been made. This

was in 1852, when Father Robert A. White, of the province of Ireland and an assistant of the Most Rev. Vincent Jandel, was sent to the United States as visitor. At the chapter held at Ghent, in 1871, it was decided to give our American province a second visitation, and the honor of making it was bestowed on the great preacher, Father Thomas Burke, who was the Irish definitor at that chapter.

Father Burke arrived in New York in the October of 1871. Although both at home and in Rome, where he had resided many years, he was known as a great pulpit orator, he came to America unheralded and without flare of torch or blare of trumpet. His humility caused him to seek to avoid public notice rather than to attract it. He came quietly and went unostentatiously about the mission on which he had been sent to America. That he was here, or why he had come, few, if any, outside the Order knew. While making his visitation he was requested to preach in the different churches of the Order. Wherever he preached, his sermons produced the profoundest impression. The people, knowing most of the older American fathers, wondered who was the new light that had come among them. It was in this way that the public gradually became aware of Father Burke's presence and mission in the United States. But it was not until he had been in America for some months—not, indeed, until he had practically finished his work in Kentucky and Ohio and in the cities of New York and Washington—that the country at large awoke to the fact that a scholar and an orator of the first magnitude was in their midst.

When Father Burke's mission to America was prac-

tically completed, the fathers of the province persuaded him to prolong his stay with them to aid in some pressing missionary work and to preach a course of Lenten sermons in Saint Vincent Ferrer's Church, New York, during February and March, 1872. It was largely through these that Father Burke rose so rapidly to the zenith of his glory in the United States —a glory that will not dim with the passage of time. Hardly had he begun his course of Lenten sermons when pressing invitations for discourses or lectures began to pour in upon him not merely from pastors of the great metropolis, but from far and wide. It was then that both Father Burke and his American brethren realized the great good he might accomplish for the Church here through his rare oratorical gifts. Humble and diffident as he was, his zeal and kindly heart disposed him to accept some of these invitations —especially those that were in the interest of charity. In this he was encouraged by the fathers of the province, who were anxious that their country should profit further from the extraordinary talents of one of their Order. Among the keenest advocates of this project was Rev. Charles H. McKenna. It was not effected, however, without its difficulties. On the one hand, the constitutions of the Dominicans limit the authority of a visitor, unless the time is extended, to one year; and, on the other, Father Burke had arranged to remain in America for only a few months, and had intended to preach but rarely, if at all. To overcome these difficulties, Father Burke, at the urgent solicitation of his American brethren, wrote to his superior at Rome for a longer leave of absence. Father Jandel not merely granted this, but authorized him to remain in the

United States until recalled. This fortunate circumstance afforded hundreds of thousands of our people the rare privilege of listening to oratory such as they had never heard.

Father Burke, during his stay in America, preached and lectured from Boston to Chicago, and from Chicago to New Orleans. Wherever he went, the largest churches or halls were engaged for his sermons and lectures. But the greatest auditoriums were often far too small to hold the thousands who came to hear him. Not infrequently as many had to be turned away as were admitted. Often many remained for hours outside the place where he spoke, in the hope of getting a look at the great orator of the day. The public prints, both religious and secular, gave the most enthusiastic accounts of his sermons and lectures. It is safe to say that no orator, whether cleric or lay, native or foreign, was ever accorded a heartier or warmer ovation, or aroused a deeper or a more general interest in America than Father Burke. And this is all the more extraordinary, as there was no great political issue or religious controversy to excite passion or to arouse prejudice.

The great orator's controversy with James Anthony Froude, it is true, created a greater sensation than any of his sermons or lectures. But this was due to the reputation of his antagonist, the exciting circumstances and result of the intellectual bout, and a curiosity to know how the great friar would acquit himself in a rôle so completely new to him, rather than to any greater display of talent or oratory, far above the ordinary though they were. While the English historian's defeat was so complete that he sought refuge

in precipitate flight from the country, some unknown influence, it is generally admitted, stayed the friar's hand and prevented him from dealing his opponent far more telling blows. Had the historic controversy never occurred, Father Burke's reputation would still remain undiminished. His sermons and lectures would still place him in the front rank of the world's orators.[1]

In Europe Father Burke had attained pre-eminence as a pulpit orator. But in America, where he found a field at once broader and better suited to his genius, he rapidly rose to undying fame. As a result of his sojourn of barely sixteen months here, he became to the pulpit of the English-speaking world what Bossuet and Lacordaire are to the pulpit of France. In studying Father Burke in the United States one is at a loss which to admire the most, his great oratorical powers, his versatility, his extraordinary endurance, his command over his audience, his charity, his deep religious spirit, or the humility with which he bore the honors that came to him. He preached on almost every imaginable topic. People of all creeds and of every walk in life went to hear him. Whatever their creed, whether they were learned or unlettered, their verdict was ever the same: they had not heard his like. He preached and lectured on different subjects as often as three times in one day—often in different

[1] Father Burke was very loath to take up the cudgels with Mr. Froude—not from any fear of his antagonist, but because he shrank from the public notoriety which it would bring upon him, and because he was unwilling to cancel any of his many engagements. The plea of his friends, however, that he come to the defense of his religion and his country finally induced him to enter into the arena of controversy. The victory over Froude was all the more remarkable because, as Father Burke continued to preach and lecture daily, he had little time to prepare, while the English historian had had exceptional opportunities to gather his matter and had come to America primed to the teeth.

cities. Nearly all his labors were in behalf of Catholic charities.[2] All in all, perhaps the country has not seen his equal. If ever a Catholic Temple of Fame is erected in the United States, one of its most conspicuous niches should be assigned to Father Tom Burke, although his connection with the Church in America was both transient and accidental.

Such was the man whose brief stay in America exercised a beneficial and lasting influence on the subject of this biography. Father McKenna heard with keen delight that Father Burke had been appointed visitor to the province, and hastened to give him a warm welcome on his arrival in New York. One of the first things to appeal to our zealous friar was the visitor's open sympathy with the life of his American brethren and his strong approval of their missionary labors. Besides, as the two men had much in common, a bond of close friendship and confidence soon arose between them. It was not long, indeed, before Burke began to exert a fascinating influence on his younger confrère. Coming as it did in the early years of his long priestly and missionary career, the value of this influence upon the life-work of Rev. Charles H. McKenna can hardly be overestimated.

[2] The variety and extent of Father Burke's gifts almost tax one's credibility. Nearly all his hundreds of sermons and lectures were in behalf of American Catholic charities. It speaks well for his disinterestedness that he lectured but three times for the benefit of his Order, and then it was at the request of others, and when the stress of poverty demanded his attention. Many prominent Catholics of New York, whose gratitude prompted them to do something for the man who had done so much for the Church in America, requested him to deliver three lectures for his Order. It was intended that the proceeds of these lectures should be used in building the church and priory of Saint Saviour, Dublin. But Father Burke insisted that one of them should be for the benefit of Saint Louis Bertrand's, Louisville, Kentucky, which he had found so heavily in debt.

Himself possessed of rare oratorical talents, no man had a keener appreciation of Burke's merits than Father McKenna. Occupied as he was on the missions, it was often out of his power to attend the sermons or lectures of the great Irish Dominican. Fortunately, however, the greater number of these were delivered in the east, where McKenna was engaged, and whenever it was possible he never failed to hear them. On these occasions he seriously studied at first-hand the man, his manner, his gestures, his line of thought, his language, his method of delivery—in short, all that went to make the great orator. He read and re-read Burke's sermons and lectures until he had them almost at his fingers' tips. Inspired with the true zeal of a Friar Preacher, he thought only of perfecting his preaching with a view of greater good to the Church and souls.

Father Burke was a saintly priest and a model religious. Under the cloak of brilliant talents, salient wit, a kindly heart and a whole-souled geniality that made him a most loveable companion, was hidden a deeply mortified spirit known only to those with whom he came into intimate contact. It is said that in obedience and humility he followed closely in the footsteps of his patron saint, Thomas of Aquin, the exemplar according to which he strove to pattern his life. The hallowed memory of his many virtues is cherished by his brethren of the provinces of Ireland, England and the United States. The church at Tallaght, Ireland, in which he is buried, and where an altar is erected over his remains, is regarded almost as a place of pilgrimage.

It was probably through his private life as a priest

and religious that Father Burke exercised his greatest influence on our American missioner. The two friends were often together. Through close study at short range the real character of Burke was revealed. To one of Father McKenna's deeply religious and susceptible nature, piety and humility made a far stronger appeal than genius or eloquence. When all these were found in one person, as they were in Father Burke, the influence was magnetic and irresistible. To the end of his long life Father McKenna never tired of speaking of Father Burke, or of recounting the great qualities of the man. He thanked God that he had been blessed with the opportunity to study closely both the public and the private life of the man from whom he felt that he had received many blessings.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MISSIONS.

(1874–1875)

FROM 1866, when they first began organized work on a large scale in this field of apostolic labor, the Dominicans had enjoyed an enviable reputation for efficiency in conducting parochial missions. Yet, while they had come conspicuously to the forefront as missioners prior to the arrival of Father Burke, it cannot be denied, we think, that the phenomenal career of the brilliant Irish Friar Preacher in the United States, brief as it was, not only gave added impetus to the zeal of his American brethren, but served to attract the attention of the country still more to their work.

Numbers of eastern Catholics, both lay and clerical, have expressed to the writer their conviction that the advent of the great Irish friar was a most fortunate circumstance in the life of our missioner. In their opinion, the sensation created by the genius of Burke went far, after his return to Europe, towards arousing the interest of the east in the zeal and eloquence of McKenna, who, although he was then but a beginner, had shown talents of a notably superior order. Thus, they argued, he rose to renown more rapidly than would have been possible otherwise. Be this as it may, once he had gained the reputation of being one of the leading pulpit orators of the country, he maintained that reputation—as also his hold on the

country's esteem and affection—practically to the end of his long life.

If the opinion given above be correct, we have now arrived at the time when the effect of Father Burke's influence in favor of his friend began to be apparent. There can be no doubt that Father McKenna had at this period begun to reap the fruit of his close study of the distinguished foreign Dominican. It was a study from which the Church in the United States, whether we consider it from an historical point of view or from that of the salvation of souls, was to receive no small blessing.

The provincial and superiors, fearful of another breakdown, sought to spare the zealous priest by assigning him to fewer missions during the year following his illness. But while he bowed without complaint to the will of those whom God had placed over him, as was the invariable rule of his long, exemplary religious life, he often felt like fretting under the restrictions placed upon him, which sometimes prevented him from doing work which he believed he could accomplish without endangering his health. But the time not given to the missions was not time lost by the industrious friar. It was devoted to serious study, to reading, to preparation of sermons and lectures, and to the extension of the Rosary and Holy Name sodalities, particularly those of Saint Vincent Ferrer's Church, where he still remained the spiritual director of the local Holy Name Society. Thus the year 1874, notwithstanding the leniency of his superiors, was rich in fruitage. And the year 1875, as we have often heard him say, he considered one of the busiest of his life.

The priests and people of Brooklyn, it seems, had become quite partial to the Dominicans as missionaries. Two missions given by them in that city early in 1874 deserve passing comment. In both of them Father McKenna took a conspicuous part. The first was given for Rev. Edward O'Reilly at the church of Saint Stephen in the month of March. It was most successful. The stately edifice was packed from the opening to the end of the spiritual exercises, and thousands approached the sacraments. It was closed with an interesting ceremony. The delighted pastor, to commemorate the success of his great parochial mission, lighted for the first time an illuminated cross that surmounted the lofty steeple of his church, and that was long considered one of the sights of Brooklyn.

The other was the annual mission of the fathers at Saint Paul's, where, in spite of the little time that had elapsed since the previous mission, immense throngs gathered to attend the spiritual exercises and to hear the sermons. Seven thousand persons approached the sacraments. An interesting feature of this mission deserves to be recorded in our biography, because it brings into view another salient characteristic of Father McKenna's many-sided zeal. A Christ-like trait of our gentle friar was his great love for children. He believed with his Divine Master, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." He was in raptures, therefore, when he heard that seven hundred children would make the mission and that the spiritual exercises for these little ones were to be entrusted principally to him. Father McKenna's heart went out to his youthful audience and he left nothing undone to enkindle in their tender souls a genuine love of God—to implant

in their plastic minds sound principles of religious devotion. The account of the mission tells us that it was inspiring to see the devotion with which these young people received the sacrament that makes us soldiers of Christ. Their fervor made so strong an impression on Father McKenna himself that he ever retained a vivid recollection of the mission. But a short time, indeed, before his death—more than forty years afterwards—he spoke of it to the writer.

From the beginning of his mission work, it was Father McKenna's custom to join his efforts with those of his confrères to induce the pastors for whom they labored to have special exercises for the children. It is likely, indeed, that his zeal in this regard contributed much towards the establishment of the practice which is now almost universal, of devoting a part of every mission to the youth of the parish. On such occasions it was a source of unfeigned happiness to the good missioner to give his youthful audiences simple exhortations suited to their age and mental development. No less did they delight in listening to the earnest admonitions of the fatherly Dominican. At first, because of his naturally severe countenance, his "dear little ones," as he was wont to call them, might be timid and shy; but he knew how to win their hearts. The assuring voice, the kindly words, the engaging manners of the whole-souled priest soon caused them not only to forget their fear, but to wish to draw nearer to the speaker. The glowing accounts which they carried home had their effect on the parents, bringing them to the mission in increased numbers. God alone knows the good the zealous friar effected through his familiar talks with children on the missions.

But it was the older boy and the young man who came most fully under Father McKenna's influence. It was a tonic to the good missionary's soul to address these two classes, to speak familiarly with them, to give them advice and encouragement. His heart went out to them, for he felt that in these lay possibilities for good that were lasting and far-reaching. A priest, he believed, could devote his sacred ministry to no nobler work than that of winning the affections and the confidence of young men, of quickening their faith, or of guiding boys approaching manhood safely through that dangerous period when evil habits are so easily contracted. In this, too, it is safe to say he had learned a practical lesson from his contact with the world in his early life.

No doubt it was in the Dominican apostle's love for boys and young men, and in his interest in their spiritual welfare, that lay the secret of his success in developing vocations. Few, if any, Catholic clergymen in the United States have been instrumental in bringing greater numbers into the priesthood than Rev. Charles H. McKenna, whose zeal in this regard began to bear fruit about the time of which we now write. But of this we shall speak in subsequent chapters.

In the Brooklyn *Catholic Review* of March 27, 1875, we find an interesting account of another extraordinary mission given at Saint Paul's in that city. This was a mission of which the writer has often heard Father McKenna speak. Singling out the missionary for special mention, the *Review's* correspondent thus pictures him engaged in his favorite work of gathering young men to Christ: "Father McKenna, another of the band, lectures most effectually for the young, and

the crowd of young men gathered around him to be received into the Holy Name Society is an evidence of how they appreciated his work."

The labors of Father McKenna and his companions at this mission may readily be imagined when it is remembered that it lasted but two weeks, that only five priests were engaged on it, and that fifteen thousand persons received holy communion. These labors, however, were not unusual, but merely a specimen of the work carried on by the fathers the greater part of the year. Similarly, the efforts of Father McKenna in behalf of the young people of Saint Paul's parish were but a repetition of what was done by him at practically every mission in which he took part.

Wherever in his wide travels the good missionary established the Holy Name Society or found it in existence, he exerted all his energy to enlist the interest of the young men in its cause, and to have them enroll their names as active members. For children he urged the sodality of Saint Thomas of Aquin, commonly known as the Angelic Warfare. He felt that no more appropriate patron could be placed over the innocence of youth than the great Dominican saint whose extraordinary purity of soul, no less than his luminous intellect, has caused him to be likened to the angels and to be known as the Angelic Doctor.

Largely through the advocacy of Father McKenna the Angelic Warfare has gained a wide popularity in many parts of the United States. Thousands upon thousands of children throughout the country have been enrolled in it. Seeing that for these also a religious manual would be of much service, he compiled for their use and guidance, as also for that of their

spiritual directors, *The Angelic Guide,* containing the history of the society, the rules and conditions of membership, prayers, hymns, and the devotion of the six Sundays in honor of Saint Thomas. This little book, like Father McKenna's other religious works, has gone through many reprints and editions, and has found readers in great numbers.

But our missionary's zeal did not stop here. It was such a zeal that it caused him to be ever on the alert to learn where and how more good might be done, how the interest of souls might be further advanced. With his keen insight into human nature, he realized that in the things of the soul, no less than in those of the world, much depends on sustained organization. He realized, too, that as youth is trained so it will develop; that, therefore, coordination of sodalities from childhood to the years of manhood and womanhood is the surest way of sustaining and advancing the societies of a parish and furthering the spiritual welfare of a congregation. Thus about this time we find Father McKenna, as an inducement to pastors to establish the confraternity, advocating the Angelic Warfare, apart from its own intrinsic merits, as a feeder for young ladies' sodalities and the Junior Holy Name Society. The latter he urged, in turn, as a most effective means of fostering and perpetuating the Holy Name for men. The great good he accomplished in the course of his long and active life through earnest promotion of religious societies cannot be overestimated.

It was in pursuance of this purpose that, in 1875, our missioner published the *Dominican Manual.* This work, although intended primarily for the young and for Holy Name men, contains in its three hundred

and fifty pages, besides rules and regulations for the Holy Name Society and the Angelic Warfare, prayers and devotions for members of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, rosarians and the faithful in general. The *Dominican Manual* also met with great success, particularly in the many parishes under the guidance of his Order.

But it is now time to give the reader an idea of Father McKenna's preaching and sermons at this period of his life. While he possessed considerable erudition, some maintained that the secret of his success as a preacher lay rather in his extraordinary personality, his earnestness and in his inimitably effective way of saying things than in what he said. His life was, indeed, a striking example of what he preached. A rough sketch of a sermon on fraternal charity which was found among his effects, and which we think must have been written about this time, not only reflects the divine charity that quickened his soul, but presents a fair sample of his Sunday and missionary discourses. Taking as his text John XIII, 34: "A new commandment I give you; that you love one another as I have loved you," the holy friar proceeds to say:

"There is not, perhaps, in all the life of our Divine Lord, as recorded by the four evangelists, a more beautiful or impressive passage, nor one that more clearly expresses the true character of our Christian religion, than that which I have just quoted from Christ's farewell discourse to His beloved disciples. The Saviour, as St. John tells us again, having loved His own who were in the world, loved them to the end. He prayed the Heavenly Father to keep them in His sacred name. He prayed that where He was, there also might they be. He had humbled Himself before the apostles and the disciples; He had humbled Him-

self for them. He had taught them the truth of the Father, shown them the way to heaven, given them the bread of life eternal. He had promised to remain always with them in truth and in spirit; had told them that He was to lay down His life for them. What more, one might say, could He do for them? What further doctrine had He to teach them? Yet, now that He is about to bid farewell to His chosen ones, He gives them a fuller manifestation of His divine will. As a last bequest He gives them a new commandment. And what, my brethren, would you imagine this commandment to be? Would you think that it was that they should fast and pray? No, no! Our Lord knew well they would do this when He had returned to His Heavenly Father. He had taught them to pray, to fast, to mortify themselves. He had set them an example which He knew they would imitate. Might the new commandment, then, be that they should offer themselves as a sacrifice for Him, even as He was about to offer Himself for them? No, it was not even this. The Master knew also that the apostolic college were to win the martyr's crown; that, like Himself, they were to drink the chalice to the dregs. Possibly, indeed, they also had now learned to expect such an oblation of themselves. This, therefore, was not the new commandment of Jesus. Shall I tell you what it was? Shall I tell you that it was more than to die for Christ? To die for our Lord, who first offered His life for us, although heroic in the extreme, were an honor, a privilege, a grace granted only to the chosen few. But to die, if necessary, for our equals; nay, for our inferiors: ah, this is hard for human nature. To obey such a command for Christ's sake is, indeed, a proof of fidelity to Him. Yet it would seem that, for the apostles at least, this was the new commandment which the Master held in reserve to be the last given them. 'A new commandment I give you; that you love one another as I have loved you.'"

The exordium finished, our missionary proceeds to divide Christ's preaching in regard to fraternal charity—a virtue that is to be a characteristic trait of the

true Christian—into precept and counsel. To "love our neighbors as ourselves," that is, to "do unto others, as we would have others do unto us," he tells us, is a precept for all, and necessary for salvation. To love one another as Christ loved us, that is, unto death, is a counsel which, if followed, makes the perfect Christian. The first point Father McKenna develops at length, proves his doctrine from Scripture and theology, and shows that fraternal charity is distinctively a Christian virtue practiced through all the ages of the Church. Coming then to the second point of his sermon, he insists that, with the grace of God, not only is love of our fellow-man in this fullest sense of the term possible, but that it has ever been the effort of the saints to attain this high degree of perfection.

Fraternal charity was a subject on which our friar loved both to converse and to preach—possibly a verification of the words of Christ: "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh." It was a topic that ever caused him to rise to the heights of his eloquence. And that Father Charles McKenna himself practiced the precept of fraternal charity to an eminent degree cannot be denied. Nor can it be doubted, we think, that he possessed much of that heroic love of his fellow-man which he tells us is a counsel, and which he says brings one to the summit of perfection coveted by the saints.

CHAPTER XII.

LABORS AND METHOD.

(1876–1878)

An interesting episode related of one of our noted public men and orators—Henry Clay—exercised a great influence on the style and preaching of Father McKenna. The distinguished statesman, as the story goes, had a favorite colored man-servant whom he was accustomed to take with him to the National Capital. Proud of his master and fond of oratory, the elderly colored man never failed to hear the speeches of Mr. Clay. On one occasion, when the great orator had delivered a masterful oration that particularly pleased his servant, the old negro waited at the Capitol to congratulate his master. When Mr. Clay appeared, his colored servant hastened to him, and grasping his hand, exclaimed: "Massah Clay, that was the greatest speech I ever heard you make. This poor old colored man understood every word of it; and, what is more, every time you opened your mouth, you said something." The great statesman, it is said, felt that his negro servant had paid him one of the best compliments he had ever received.

Father McKenna, in speaking to young priests on preaching, as he was wont to do, often referred to this incident in the life of Henry Clay. The great missioner thought that if a public man engaged in the arena of politics felt it his duty so to speak as to instruct and to be understood by the common people,

an ambassador of Christ should, for still greater reasons, aim to keep his sermons down to the level of the lowliest of his audience. He was far, however, from advocating trite and commonplace sermons, for he believed that a priest should put his best into his instructions to the people. The poor and humble, he used to say, were especially loved by Christ. Among this class the Saviour mingled when on earth. From among these He chose His apostles; He gave them every proof of a special predilection. The priest, therefore, following the example of his Master, should preach in a particular manner for the poor and give his time to them rather than to the rich. Love of the poor the good friar believed to be a sure sign of a faithful minister of Christ.

His efforts to keep well within the mental grasp of the least educated of his hearers at times caused our zealous missioner to sacrifice eloquence of diction to simplicity of language. Yet, because of his earnestness, his eloquence and his inimitable way of saying even the simplest things, his sermons never failed both to appeal to the untutored and effectively to impress the learned.

Ever anxious to improve himself, Father McKenna sought criticisms of his sermons from whatever source they might come. These he carefully fixed in his tenacious memory for future guidance. No suggestion was beneath his notice, if only it would aid him in the harvest of souls. He cared little for the compliments of the learned, but he keenly relished the appreciation of the poor and unlettered, to whom his great soul went out in Christ-like compassion. When he drew these latter to the church in great numbers, as

he generally did, he believed he was fruitfully fulfilling his mission as a preacher of the Gospel.

Although Father McKenna possessed a good knowledge of theology, had a wide acquaintance with history, and was well versed in the Sacred Scriptures, he seldom indulged in an argumentative style. He felt that at least on the missions and in ordinary discourses on the Gospels of the Sundays the plain didactic method was productive not only of greater immediate good, but of more lasting results. He realized that those who did not wish to see the truth would be convinced by no argument, however strong; and he was satisfied that both Catholics and non-Catholics of good will were benefited more by a plain statement of the teachings of the Church, which they could understand and would retain because they understood, than by any learned expositions of the truths of faith. While he was blessed with no ordinary power for developing his subject, in this also he held himself to the level of his audience. This power, although restrained, blended happily with a fertile Celtic imagination, native dramatic powers, a splendid voice, earnestness, and a striking way of saying even simple things, with the result that his sermons were models of strong, persuasive oratory.

Like the two years reviewed in the preceding chapter, those of 1876, 1877 and the first half of 1878 were given principally to missions in many parts of the east. Among the priests and people of Brooklyn he had already become a favorite. Now Massachusetts, although farther away from his home, began to vie with Long Island in honoring the saintly Dominican, and was soon to become one of his most fruitful fields of

labor. During this time also he made several excursions into the mid-west, and as far south as Memphis, Tennessee, everywhere meeting with signal success. A few missions in which he took part in the city of Washington, gave him a reputation as an eloquent speaker in the National Capital, where oratory is so common that it must excel indeed to be appreciated.

It were both tedious to the writer and tiresome to the reader to follow the missionary in his travels through the country in search of spiritual conquests during these two and a half years. Suffice it to say that his active ministry kept him almost constantly from home, and that he saw but little of his convent from September to July.

His absence from New York made Father McKenna anxious to resign his position as spiritual director of the Holy Name Society at Saint Vincent Ferrer's, but his wish was not granted. He did not fail, whenever this was possible, to be present at the meetings and for the communion Sundays of the society—the second Sunday of every other month—and for this purpose often made long, hurried journeys from the missions on which he was engaged and back again, another priest taking his place during his absence. When unable to preside in person at the assemblies and spiritual exercises of his cherished society, Father McKenna did not neglect to notify his superior and to request that some one be appointed to act in his stead. Such keen interest in their souls' welfare—such sacrifice for the good of their society—caused their spiritual director to be idolized by the early Holy Name men of New York. To this day, those who still live hold him in veneration and speak of him with reverence and enthusiasm.

As no greater tribute can be paid a minister of the Gospel than to say that he strove to model his life after that of his Divine Master, so no higher praise can be bestowed upon a religious than to say that he was deeply imbued with the spirit of his order and its founder. That both these tributes may truly be paid Father McKenna those who knew him intimately can testify. While, as if in verification of the old adage, "So many men, so many minds" (*tot homines, quot sententiae*), others at times differed from him in opinion, there was never any room to question his candid sincerity, or to doubt his burning zeal for the glory of God and the cause of religion. The mottoes of Saint Dominic and his Order, "Salvation of souls" first of all, and "Praise and bless the Lord, and preach the truth of the Gospel," (*laudare, benedicere et praedicare*), formed the key-note of the good Friar Preacher's long sacerdotal life. Thus it is little wonder that, as he grew in age, he grew likewise in holiness and zeal, in eloquence and reputation. His deep, abiding devotion to the Virgin Mother and his consuming love for her Divine Son sustained his energies, as also his efforts to spread the societies of the Rosary and the Holy Name. His success in this field of labor is attested by the numbers who became rosarians or men of the Holy Name. In the interest of the latter society we now find him, in concert with his brethren, giving special missions for *men only,* at which not infrequently five hundred or more new members were enrolled in the society.

Father McKenna's devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was extraordinary. Though, not to detain the faithful, he said an ordinary low mass in twenty-five

minutes, or in even less time, his devout attitude while offering up the holy sacrifice awakened sentiments of the keenest piety. The good priest seldom passed a church without entering to pay a visit to his eucharistic Lord, before whom it was his delight to pour out his soul in heartfelt prayer.

The Blessed Sacrament was a subject on which he loved to preach. In later years the writer often heard him speak on this topic with telling effect. On such occasions he never failed to reach the heights of eloquent pleading in his efforts to induce the people to go often to mass and to receive communion frequently. It is a fact that speaks well for the zeal of the Friars Preacher that, long years before the appearance of the pontifical letters of Pius X (the *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* of December 20, 1905, and the *Quam Singulari* of August 8, 1910), urging frequent or even daily communion, there were many daily communicants in the Dominican church of Saint Vincent Ferrer, New York. As among these pious people there were a number of Father McKenna's friends, doubtless the edifying practice was in no small measure due to his wise and prudent guidance. Like the late saintly Pontiff, our apostolic missioner sought throughout his long priestly life to bring the faithful nearer to Christ through the august sacrament of the Eucharist.

To the present period of the great missionary's life apparently belongs a rather lengthy outline of a sermon on the real presence. Evidently it was written for a mixed congregation, and it was one of his few early controversial discourses. Its style, however, is adapted at once to convince the unbeliever and to

quicken the faith and devotion of the practical Catholic. Delivered by one endowed with Father McKenna's superb oratorical ability it must have made a deep impression. He was, indeed, eminently successful in stirring the feelings of his audience—in arousing them either to sorrow and repentance for their sins, or to love and devotion to Christ their Lord and God their Father.

To the knowledge of men acquired by experience in the world as a common laborer Father McKenna had now added that deeper insight into souls gained through more intimate contact with them as their spiritual guide. Well had he learned human nature, the motives and passions that sway it. Through his priestly ministrations he soon came to be able to read a soul almost as he could read a book. This advantage he skilfully employed for the higher good of his penitents and audiences.

Through tireless reading and study, with the aid of a splendid memory, the zealous priest soon amassed a fund of information useful for the work in which he was principally engaged. In the accumulation of this he drew freely upon the rich store of ecclesiastical and devotional literature in the French language which he read with ease. When preaching it was his invariable custom to watch carefully what manner of sermon most touched the people. Another of his habits was to station himself at some point of vantage in order to make a critical study of the effect of the discourses of others. In this way his good practical judgment soon convinced him that the learned sermon, with its rigidly logical order, division, and subdivision, such as he found in French books, was by no means suited to the apostolate of parochial missions in the United States.

Nature had endowed him with a keen psychological sense. Thus he early realized that to accomplish lasting good it is as necessary to touch the heart as to appeal to the mind; nay, that oftentimes the heart is the highway that leads to the intellect. His native good judgment convinced him that it is impossible to be exhaustive in a sermon of from one half to three quarters of an hour; that a discourse following a closely connected line of logical argument demands a strict attention of which but few in an ordinary audience are capable; and that, therefore, the most fruitful oration is one that contains a few prominent, clearly defined ideas presented in a bold, pointed manner. In this style of sermon the earnest Friar Preacher became in course of time a past-master.

Notwithstanding his sincere humility, by the close of this period of continuous preaching the success that had attended Father McKenna's efforts had given him confidence in his powers. Many another with far less reason might have been overcome by pride. Not so our zealous missionary. He keenly realized that his talent was from God and he felt that he was in conscience bound to use it for the promotion of the divine glory and the cause of religion. Many another, content to rest on his laurels, might have been tempted to relax his study and preparation. But with Father McKenna success was a spiritual tonic—a stimulus to further endeavor. He could not think of rest when there was so much to be done.

While he no longer found it necessary to write and memorize ordinary mission and Sunday sermons, he devoted much time to their preparation. Over and over he pondered the topics on which he thought he

should be prepared to preach, until his mind was saturated with them. In this way, in course of time, he came to know the Gospels of the Sundays and the principal feasts practically by heart. Thus, although Father McKenna possessed considerable spontaneity, his so-called extemporaneous sermons were in reality the fruit of unremitting preparation—the overflow, so to say, of a mind steeped with its subject through serious thought and study. But to make assurance doubly sure, he wrote out numerous sermon-plans, fixing them in his memory and using them as a loom on which to weave the woof and warp of his Gospel message to the people.

Of his special sermons and his lectures Father McKenna made it a rule to write out rather full outlines, but without any special effort at style, and these he committed practically to memory. This wise custom he maintained through all his long public career. But his native eloquence and imagination, his mastery of his subject, the life and vigor that he put into it, the matchless way in which he clothed the framework of his discourse—all these combined to take away the least suggestion of the memorized oration, generally so dry and spiritless.

One of the reasons that caused our friar to adhere so faithfully to this habit of writing out minutely the skeletons of his lectures and special sermons, was the realization that a public speaker cannot be at his best at all times; that on occasions when the spirit, because of the sluggishness of the body, refuses to work with happy facility, such well digested plans committed to memory invigorate the mind by the confidence they inspire. In his charity he urged young clergymen as-

piring to be preachers to adopt this practice; for he felt that in the lack of such outlines thus firmly fixed in the mind often lay the cause of the failure of young men of promise, as also of the occasional disappointments given by orators of known ability.

Nature had blessed Rev. Charles McKenna with a good voice, which through constant use had grown full, strong and resonant. By practice he had brought it under perfect control. His low tones were deep, rich and mellow; the higher sometimes approached a tenor. He could change his voice from one tone to another with ease. Whatever the key he took, it was pleasing and agreeable. Through tireless effort he had also become a master of expression, emphasis, modulation. All this—together with a tall, finely proportioned physical frame, a striking face, a mortified and spiritual countenance, graceful gestures, a magnetic personality and an evident zeal—conspired to make a pulpit orator of note and a successful missionary.

Without in any way courting it, the eloquent Friar Preacher soon became immensely popular among both laity and clergy, wherever his duty as a priest called him. Seldom did he give a mission but that the pastor sought his services again—often, indeed, for many successive missions. The friendships thus formed with the clergy lasted almost without exception until death. About the time of which we speak, he contracted an intimate friendship with Rev. John McCabe, pastor of Saint John's Church, Providence, that led to Father McCabe's bequeathing his fine library to the Order at his death.

The reader's attention has been called to the success that everywhere attended the efforts of the fathers in

the missionary field, and to the numbers that came to receive their ministrations. No one, however, was the center of more attraction than Father McKenna, young as he was. A striking instance of this is found in a mission over which he presided at the church of Saint James, Salem, Massachusetts, in late February and early March, 1877. Though many had to be turned away because of the lack of space to accommodate them, the pastor was obliged to place extra supports under the galleries to prevent them from falling under the weight of the crowds that were admitted to the sermons. Frequently non-Catholics were brought into the fold by the missionaries' happy exposition of Catholic doctrine. In this good work, too, Father McKenna began to play a conspicuous part almost from the time he entered upon his apostolic career. The influence of his piety over those not of the faith was extraordinary.

While Father McKenna shone for his priestly zeal and apostolic labors, he was no less noted for his humility, his religious obedience, his submission to the decrees of God. His superiors he regarded as representatives of the divine will. The crosses sent from heaven he looked upon as blessings in disguise. During the summer of 1877, on account of the temporary absence of the novice-master, he was placed in charge of the novitiate at Saint Joseph's, near Somerset, Ohio. At this time one of his nephews—his own godson—died at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Two brief letters written to the young man's mother, Mrs. Roger Dougherty, in this connection serve not only to reveal the friar's deeply religious character, but to show how his heart went out in compassion to those whom he

loved—how he himself practiced and taught submission to the divine will in all things—how he ever sought to lead the saddened soul to God as the sovereign comforter.

"CHURCH OF ST. PETER, DANBURY, CONN.

"*Dear Sister:*

"I got your last letter and am very sorry that there is no change for the better. God in His mercy help you to bear your heavy cross! Truly it appears that the last drops in the bitter chalice are the most difficult to drink. Yet, after all, our Father in Heaven has prepared the cup for each of us, and we must try to repeat with our Lord: 'The chalice which my Father has prepared, shall I not drink it?' Let us remember that in a very short time eternity will be ours; and how soon will all be forgotten of the sufferings of time? St. Paul tells us that the sufferings of this life cannot be compared with the joys prepared for us in Heaven. Mother told me that once when Mary Bradley gave way to bitter grief, her mother, Aunt Matty, said to her: 'Mary, dear, do you set no value on the joys of Heaven?' Bear up bravely for the rest of the road which will be short, but the reward will be eternal. God bless you all. I am thinking of going West soon. Will see Mary.

"Your affectionate brother,

"C. H. McKENNA."[1]

On receipt of the news of young Dougherty's death the friar wrote again:

"ST. JOSEPH'S CONVENT,
"Somerset, Perry Co., Ohio,
"July 21, 1877.

"*My dear Sister:*

"I received your telegram last evening announcing the death of poor John. May God rest his soul! Dear Sister, I regret

[1] An undated letter to Mrs. Roger Dougherty, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Copy furnished by Miss Mary Dougherty of the same place.

very much my inability to go to you immediately. You know how my heart sympathizes with you in your hour of sorrow. I know that I cannot realize the extent of your grief; for as none but a mother can know a mother's joy, so none but a mother can understand the depth of a mother's sorrow. This morning I offered up the adorable Sacrifice for my god-child. I shall not forget him in the Mass. I have asked the prayers of the Community in his behalf, and tomorrow they will offer their Holy Communions for him. . . ."

He then proceeds to tell his sister why he cannot go to Lancaster,—his position as master of novices requires his presence in the convent. Continuing his letter, he writes:

"*My dear sister,* let your hope in the tender mercy of our heavenly Father sustain you now. One by one those we love are taken from us—rather they go before us as a new bond drawing our hearts to Heaven. Each tie that binds us to this world is gradually loosened that we may be freer to set our hearts on the things of Heaven. For, says Our Lord, where our treasure is, there also is our heart. Dear sister, you have seen many of your heart's treasures taken—I hope to Heaven. Our father, our mother, your own little ones. But God is good, and His mercy is from generation to generation. Our loss is our dear ones' joy. They go to our Father's home to await us, to pray for us, to meet us in Heaven. Many of my spiritual children have gone before me and my eyes are now filling with tears. They promised to pray for me, and won't your children pray for you? Yes, be of good courage; joyfully embrace the cross —the separation will be of short duration. Write me the particulars.

"Your loving brother,

"C. H. McKenna."[2]

[2] Letter to Mrs. Roger Dougherty, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Copy furnished by Miss Mary Dougherty of the same place.

The missionary's stay at his alma mater was short, for on the return of the novice-master in September, 1877, he again took up his customary labors. But we have now arrived at a point in his biography where we must note a modification in his method of directing souls. In later life Father McKenna's conscience often troubled him lest, in the first years of his missionary career, he had been too severe both in his sermons and in the confessional. Both the good and the bad make the missions, and experience had by this time convinced him that such a method is best for neither the one nor the other. The consciences of the good, he felt, are thus too much disturbed; those of the bad hardly benefited.

Yet, on the one hand, he was too much an enemy of sin not to assail it with all his energy; on the other, he had become too well acquainted with human nature not to know that it is unwise to wound too deeply those whom he would reform and lead to a new life, or to disturb to excess the consciences of those whom he would guide to a higher degree of spirituality. He therefore adopted a plan—a plan which he followed until the end of his missionary activity—which he had learned to be more conducive to the betterment of both the wicked and the virtuous. Like a trained lawyer pleading the cause of Christ, the missionary first studied and won his audience. Then he proceeded to denounce vice with the most forceful and direct language that he dared use without running the risk of still further hardening evil-doers in their sinful ways or tempting the good and virtuous to despair. Like a practiced physician, he was skilful in healing spiritual

ills, in making the strong stronger, in soothing by kind words of encouragement the wounds caused by his onslaughts against sin. Both the balm for the injured and the encouragement for the pious he drew from Sacred Scripture, the lives of the saints and the reward promised alike to the penitent sinner and to those who lead good lives.

To stern enmity for sin the zealous friar added the deepest sympathy for its victims—a sympathy that was clearly manifest even in his severest moments. But believing that love exercises a stronger power over men than fear, he sought rather to inspire his audience with a love of God than with fear of the punishment of sin. Herein, we are inclined to believe, lay one of the strongest influences in the success of his apostolic work. In this, too, he was much the same manner of man as the founder of his Order, Saint Dominic, whose life he strove to imitate in all things.

But the missionary's aim was not merely to bring people to love God and to hate sin. He sought also, as much as his limited time permitted, to instruct them in their religion. For this reason, in both his mission sermons and ordinary Sunday discourses—particularly in the latter—he interspersed much solid Christian doctrine with the earnest exhortations by which he strove to lead his audience to avoid evil and to practice virtue. That he did so with effect is evident from the fact that it was not unusual to hear persons say that they loved their religion the more—were the better instructed and the better Catholics for having listened to him. A further testimony to his success at this period is found in one of the leading Catholic papers of the day which tells us:

"The Dominican Fathers have been unusually busy this year giving missions. Their societies of the Holy Rosary, the Holy Name and the Angelic Warfare are becoming more known and more appreciated day by day. . . . *Laudare, Benedicere et Praedicare* is the motto of the grand old Order of St. Dominic, and the Brethren in North America seem determined practically to carry it out."[3]

[3] *Freeman's Journal,* April 6, 1878.

CHAPTER XIII.

PRIOR IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.

(1878–1881)

ALTHOUGH the Dominicans were among the first missionaries in Kentucky, settling there in the year 1806, it was not until 1865 that they were invited to the state's chief city. At the time of their arrival, Louisville was an unpromising pioneer village, strung in disorderly fashion along the banks of the Ohio. There were few, if any, Catholics in the town. Thus, as Bishop Carroll of Baltimore had given them full liberty to choose whatever place they should judge best adapted to their purpose, the fathers rejected Louisville and selected instead the principal Catholic settlement which was in the interior of the state and seemingly at once the most convenient center for their apostolic labors and the location best suited for their future college and religious novitiate.

In a few years, however, the little border town on the Ohio began to assume importance, and it became evident to all that it was destined soon to be the metropolis of Kentucky. But as the Dominicans had already exhausted their meager resources by the erection of the convent and church of Saint Rose and the college of Saint Thomas of Aquin in an agricultural district, it was almost impossible for them to transfer their foundation to the city of Louisville. Other influences that helped to hold them fast to their rural settlement, were the opposition of Bishop Flaget, the

attachment of the fathers to the simple, open-hearted country people to whose spiritual welfare they ministered, and the affection they naturally felt for the first foundation of their new province.

In the year 1841 there arrived in Louisville a zealous young ecclesiastical student, Peter Joseph Lavialle, who three years later was raised to the priesthood. Through careful study of the history of the Church in Kentucky and the exercise of his sacerdotal functions —he was first professor at the seminary of Saint Thomas, eighteen miles from Saint Rose's Priory on one side, and afterwards president of Saint Mary's College, ten miles distant on the other—Father Lavialle came to know and to admire the quiet, laborious missionary zeal of the sons of Saint Dominic. In this way he grew to be one of their staunchest supporters in the diocese. Almost his first official act on the receipt of the bulls of his appointment to the see of Louisville, in 1865, was to urge the fathers to build a church and establish a house of the Order in his episcopal city. The provincial, Father O'Carroll, accepted the generous offer, and towards the end of the year the venerable missionary, Father Matthew A. O'Brien, was sent to organize the new parish and to prepare the way for the erection of a convent. Father O'Brien was a bosom friend of Doctor Lavialle, and at first lived with him, but when he had built a small frame church near the site of the present stately Saint Louis Bertrand's, he rented a house in the neighborhood for a temporary home.

Because of the isolated positions of the Dominican novitiates, both in Ohio and Kentucky, recruits to the Order had been all too few. For this reason, the

fathers had for some years cherished the desire of removing their house of studies to or near some large city—particularly in the East—where they hoped vocations would be found in greater numbers. Bishop Lavialle was also anxious to bring his seminary of Saint Thomas from the country to Louisville. When he learned that the province was planning to place its principal convent in some more populous center, he induced Father O'Carroll to confer this honor upon his own episcopal city, promising to send the seminarians of the diocese to attend the courses given to the students of the Order, and in return to defray a part of the expenses incurred in the construction of the new priory. To meet this contingency a corps of fathers, with Rev. D. J. Meagher as their superior, was sent to Louisville, and in the August of 1866 work was begun on a large and costly building.

In the meantime, May 11, 1867, Doctor Lavialle died. But the administrator of the diocese, Rev. B. J. Spalding, D.D., who as vicar general had been in sympathy with the policy of transferring the diocesan seminary, and who, it was confidently supposed, would be the deceased prelate's successor, urged the fathers to continue their work. A friend of the Friars Preacher, he gave them to understand that, in case of his appointment to the episcopal charge, he would carry out the agreements that had been entered into. The new priory was completed and occupied by the students and their professors in the fall after the death of Bishop Lavialle. The future of the infant institution promised well.

Instead of Doctor Spalding, however, the late Right Rev. William George McCloskey was appointed bishop

of Louisville in March, 1868, was consecrated at Rome on May 24, and arrived in his diocese before the close of that year. With the consent of the new ordinary Father O'Carroll, notwithstanding the poverty of the province and the heavy debt incurred in the construction of the convent, instructed the superior, Rev. D. J. Meagher, to begin a spacious church to meet the growing needs of the congregation. Doubtless, like many foreigners who come to the United States, the provincial fancied money grew on trees in America. The step was ill-advised. The handsome structure increased the indebtedness of the budding house of studies almost to bankruptcy. The enormous burden was all the heavier as the new bishop, whose ideas differed from those of his predecessor, decided not to remove the seminary to Louisville, and the great cost of the priory had to be borne wholly by the fathers. Because of this financial embarrassment, work on the church had to be suspended towards the end of 1870, when the walls were barely under roof. For the same reason, the students were returned to Saint Rose's, as it was no longer possible to meet the greater outlay required to support them in the city.[1]

Practically all the resources of the province, which at that day were slender indeed, had to be poured into the Louisville institution to save it from being sold. The unfinished state of the sacred edifice and the deplorable financial condition of the Kentucky foundation, when Father Burke came on his visit to the United States, moved the distinguished orator to deliver one of his historic lectures at the Academy of Music, New

[1] *Freeman's Journal,* January 2, 1886; *Dominican Year Book,* 1912, pages 46 ff.

York, for its benefit. As a means of aiding it still further, he preached at the dedication of the church, January 3, 1873. It was, in fact, through his generosity that the fathers were finally enabled to continue work on Saint Louis Bertrand's Church to the point where it was fit for divine service.

But this help was only partial and temporary. A debt of nearly $130,000 still remained, on much of which an interest—some of it compound—of from six to eight per cent had to be paid. The parish was then new, and its territory largely uninhabited. Money was scarce and hard to get. The church was a stately Gothic structure, but without towers and wholly without ornamentation. Its walls were bare; its main altar was a mere platform covered with common unbleached white cotton, while the same material covered two boxes that were used for side altars. Plain unvarnished benches served for pews.

Such was the unfinished state of Saint Louis Bertrand's Church, Louisville, and such the pitiful financial condition of the convent of the same name in the May of 1878, when Rev. Charles H. McKenna was elected prior there. Two preceding superiors of the priory had resigned their office on account of the great debt. Partly for the same reason, partly because of his dislike for honors, and partly because he feared the position would seriously handicap, if not end, the apostolic labors in which he felt his vocation lay, the missioner sought earnestly to avoid the responsibility, but he was obliged to submit to the voice of authority.

At the time of his election to the priorship of Saint Louis Bertrand's, Father McKenna was forty-two years of age—in the eleventh of his priesthood—in the

full vigor of manhood. He was considered one of the country's foremost pulpit orators and missionaries. He was regarded not only as an exemplary but a saintly priest and religious. Withal, he had given proof of good financial ability. During a mission given not long before at the church attached to the Louisville house he had won the hearts of the people. All this, doubtless, attracted the attention of the fathers and influenced them in their choice of the zealous apostle for their superior.

When Father McKenna received the letters obliging him to accept the priorship to which he had been elected, he was engaged in a mission with his intimate friend, Rev. J. P. Turner, O.P., at the Church of the Visitation, Brooklyn; but, as he was obliged to finish this mission and to give another to the young men of Saint Stephen's parish in the same city, it was the end of June before he could start for Louisville. Characteristically he tarried in the east only long enough to fill these engagements. In his new sphere the earnest priest was to show the same energetic zeal that had stood out so prominently in all his active life.

While the constitutions of the Friars Preacher are severe in their letter, they are notably broad in spirit and in practice. Especially is this the case when there is question of the good of souls. The great end of the Order is the salvation of souls. All things are to be subservient to the attainment of this purpose. To prevent the conventual observances from unduly interfering with the institute's prime object or the specific means by which this is to be achieved—preaching and teaching—the provincial in his province and the prior in his convent are invested with wide, discretionary powers of

dispensation that possibly are given to superiors of no other religious order.

This extraordinary authority was now to be exercised in all its latitude in the case of Charles McKenna. Compelled by the sheer necessity of meeting the debt on the Louisville institution and of providing priests for the many missions the fathers were requested to give, the provincial not only authorized but urged the humble prior to continue his accustomed work, although the constitutions suppose a superior never to be long away from his convent. It was a case of that extreme necessity which knows no law, except the law of self-preservation—an exceptional course that would hardly be dreamed of in this day of greater prosperity.

Thus, while the subject of our sketch had this additional burden placed upon him, he still remained actively engaged in the work of the missions. Fortunately his shoulders were then broad and strong, enabling him to fill both positions with credit to himself and his Order, as also with profit to souls.

The greatest change caused in the missionary's life by this transfer was the widening of his field of labor. Charles Hyacinth McKenna's reputation as a zealous priest and his renown as a pulpit orator of the first magnitude had preceded him to Kentucky. Hardly had he arrived at his new home when numerous requests for missions, sermons or lectures began to pour in upon him from all parts of the mid-west. That they might not interfere with his principal work, he did not ordinarily accept invitations for special sermons or lectures unless they were to be delivered immediately before or after a mission, and in the place where the mission was to be given. Yet many were

the parishes from the Alleghany Mountains to the Mississippi River, and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, that profited by his zeal and were impressed by his eloquence during the three years that he was superior of the convent in Louisville.

The high esteem in which he was held in the east also brought him many appeals for missions there. He spent, in fact, quite as much of this period in the east as in the west.

Thus, apart from the charge of the Louisville institution, Father McKenna's labors at this time were but a repetition of those of the years through which we have followed him. He prayed; he studied; he read; he meditated—all to perfect himself still further for his apostolate—to make it more fruitful. To this end he now added his efforts to those of his brethren to advance the Rosary and Holy Name societies in the west and south. He gave them a new impetus in these parts of the country, as he had done in the east.

In the midst of his many labors the good friar found time to bring out, late in 1878, a new edition of the *Manual of the Holy Name,* and in the following year a second edition of the *Dominican Manual.* In 1880 appeared from his busy pen *St. Dominic's Tertiaries' Guide*—the largest of his devotional works. In its seven hundred and fifty odd pages the *Tertiaries' Guide* contains the history and purpose of the establishment of this great branch of the Dominican Order, the rules by which it is governed, the little office and devotions proper to its members, and prayers of a more general character. Like his other works, it makes no pretence to style; like them, also, it has the true ring of genuine piety. Although more

restricted in its scope, the manual for Dominican Tertiaries has passed through several editions.

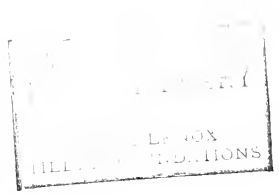
Because of his frequent and lengthy absences from the convent, necessitated by his life as a missioner, Father McKenna sincerely desired to resign his priorship. With his keen sense of responsibility, he felt that he could not fill the office of superior as the constitutions of his Order suppose, while devoting so much of his time, energy and thought to other work. As he believed it to be the will of God that he should remain in the active apostolate, he thought it his duty to seek to be relieved of the charge of the Louisville house and allowed to consecrate himself wholly to the work of the missions. But as obedience had obliged him to accept the honor, so obedience was now to compel him to remain prior of Saint Louis Bertrand's for the full term of three years.

"An obedient man shall speak of victory," the Scriptures tell us. The truth of the Biblical proverb was surely exemplified in this period of our friar's life. Despite his being so much away from home, Father McKenna's administration brought great good, both spiritual and temporal, to the Louisville church and convent—a reward, one is inclined to say, of his religious obedience.

He was too good a man to neglect in the least the things of the soul. That which he possessed himself, he sought to give out to others. Thus, though the conventual observance at Saint Louis Bertrand's has always been exemplary, the religious life of the community has never been more regular than during the time of Father McKenna's priorship. That of the parish was equally happy. The church sodalities, par-

ticularly the societies of the Rosary and Holy Name, received a new inspiration under the influence of his zeal. Deeply devoted to the souls in purgatory, he established in their behalf a confraternity of the Rosary of the Dead, to induce the people to say this extraordinarily indulgenced prayer for the Church suffering. Under his wise guidance the pious enterprise took well and put new life into the practice of this Catholic charity in the congregation. The parochial school was also an object of his paternal solicitude. No man ever realized more than the zealous prior that a full school means full pews, while no school means an empty or a poorly attended church. Because of his zeal and shining virtues no priest was ever more highly respected in the city of Louisville than Father McKenna. In the parish of Saint Louis Bertrand his memory is still venerated after a lapse of more than five and thirty years.

One of Father McKenna's first acts on assuming the priorship of Saint Louis Bertrand's was to borrow money through friends in the east at a much lower rate of interest than the fathers had been obliged to pay in Louisville. The local creditors were then paid off. Starting with this considerable saving, through economical management he was able not merely to meet current expenses, but to reduce the great debt several thousand dollars. In addition to this he greatly improved the interior of the church. During his term of office, through his exertions and the munificence of benefactors, the rough benches were replaced by pews; three wooden altars of Gothic design were installed instead of the scaffold and boxes whereon mass had previously been said, and the people provided with suit-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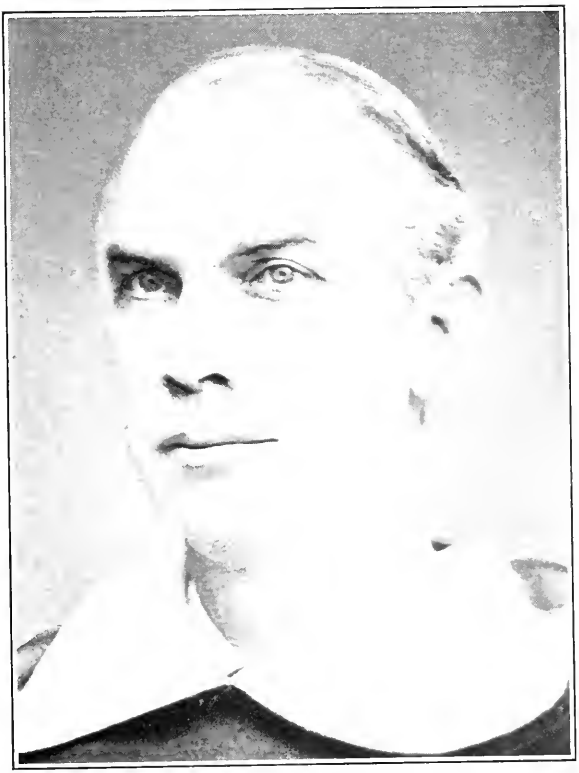


VERY REV. C. H. McKENNA AS PRIOR IN LOUISVILLE KENTUCKY.

able music by one of the finest Roosevelt organs in the south. The great bell used to call the faithful to prayer was also a gift to him. As an admirer of the beautiful, it was Father McKenna's desire to complete the church by building two graceful towers, included in the original design of the architect. But lack of resources obliged him to be content with the erection of the modest wooden cupola which still serves rather as a protection for the bell and organ than as an ornament to the sacred edifice. Nor did Father McKenna's good offices for the Louisville church and convent end with his priorship there. Although he lived in the east, making his missionary headquarters at Saint Vincent Ferrer's, New York, he remained assigned to Saint Louis Bertrand's until in 1899. During this time he contributed greatly to the lightening of the debt with which the place was burdened. Shortly after he ceased to be superior, his friendship with John Watts Kearney and family led to the donation of the present magnificent main altar. Of pure Gothic design, artistically carved in marble and inlaid with onyx, this altar is still one of the finest in the country.

Our earliest remembrance of Father McKenna dates from the period of his priorship of the convent in Louisville. When the writer was a boy of eleven or twelve years of age, the holy priest gave a mission at old Saint Rose's Church, near Springfield, Kentucky. As our boyish fancy pictured him, Father McKenna then stood full six feet in height. His frame was strong and lithe, his shoulders broad and square, his head massive, his forehead uncommonly ample. His hair was fast thinning, and what remained was growing silvery. His complexion was pallid; his face some-

what emaciated; his countenance a combination of the severe and the fatherly. His appearance was a sermon in itself. He possessed one of those rare faces that a stranger would pick out from among a thousand as denoting a deeply spiritual character and a man of superior parts. One could never forget the piercing eye; the clear, strong, sonorous voice; the graceful, majestic gesture or the earnest and eloquent pleading of the cause of Christ. That mission is still spoken of by the older people of the parish.

An interesting feature of this mission was the formation of the colored men of the parish into a special branch of the Holy Name, probably the first branch of this society in the United States composed wholly of the sons of Ham. There was hardly a colored man in the congregation who did not join it. Its good effects became apparent at once in a more faithful practice of their religion. Nor has the passage of time caused the sodality to lose its hold on the colored men of the congregation. To this day it remains one of the strongest safeguards of their Catholic faith.

The subjoined reminiscence of the zealous missioner was written at our request by a leading attorney of Kentucky, who was then, as now, a member of the parish of Saint Louis Bertrand. Its author's sound judgment, wide experience and intimate knowledge of Father McKenna make the appreciation all the more just and valuable.

"To know Father McKenna was to love him. His manner, seemingly cold and even stern, gave slight indication of the warmth of his nature. Under an exterior of apparent severity there lay concealed a heart of unusual and extraordinary tenderness. No one could enter more fully or more sympathetically

into the sorrows of others, or more truly make them his own. He was generosity itself; yet, to hear him preach, you might, at times, be tempted to think he had studied only of the inexorable justice of the Judge before whom we must all one day stand, and had given little thought to the Mercy which surpasseth all His works. I am not sure that I have ever heard one who could so powerfully portray the offended majesty of the Creator on the one hand, and the temerity of the rebellious and impenitent creature on the other. Yet, he was no more forceful in dilating upon the justice of God than he was effective in the portrayal of His love. The Return of the Prodigal was one of his favorite themes. Many a time I have heard him enlarge upon the Gospel parable until all within the sound of his voice were visibly affected by his words. He was a most eloquent and effective preacher. His eloquence was not in his diction merely; it was, indeed, reason aflame. His intense earnestness gave power and even beauty to his sermons.

"I am now trying to describe Father McKenna as I knew him thirty-five years ago—from 1878 to 1881, when he was prior at St. Louis Bertrand's in Louisville and before that time. He was a man of tireless energy and of iron frame. You could not know him without becoming impressed with the thought that he had literally obeyed the command of the Master to leave all things and follow Him. His whole mind, heart and soul were devoted freely and ungrudgingly to the duties of his high calling. He was always and everywhere the priest, never for an instant forgetting the sublime dignity of his office; yet always humble and approachable as a child. His wide experience as a missionary added greatly to his knowledge of men. He was a splendid conversationalist, gifted and entertaining to a marked degree. During his pastorate at St. Louis Bertrand's, his influence was most marked on the men of the parish. He devoted most of his energy to them. He was the founder of the Holy Name Society in Louisville and in many other cities throughout the country. The impression he made in Saint Louis Bertrand's

has never been effaced. He will be long remembered by all who had the pleasure and the privilege of knowing him as a typical son of St. Dominic, whose heart was always burning with the apostolic zeal, which has made the name of the Dominicans blessed throughout the world—an ornament and honor to the Church in so many lands."[2]

[2] Letter from Judge Matthew O'Doherty, Louisville, Kentucky, June 25, 1915.

CHAPTER XIV.

PREACHER GENERAL: HEAD OF THE MISSIONS.

(1880–1882)

ALTHOUGH Father McKenna, on the expiration of his priorship in Louisville, remained assigned to Saint Louis Bertrand's, he returned to the convent of Saint Vincent Ferrer; for New York was the most convenient center from which to reach and to arrange for the greater number of the missions then given by the eastern band of missionaries.

As a successful conductor of parochial missions the distinguished Dominican admittedly had now no superior in the United States. Some there were who gave him the first place as a pulpit orator, and held that the country had seen only one who could preach with such telling effect—Father Tom Burke. Although Father Burke certainly surpassed his American brother in more than one respect, it may be doubted if he could ever have equalled him in that direct, irresistible appeal to the heart which formed one of the strongest points in Father McKenna's oratory. Certainly, too, McKenna exercised a greater power over men than Burke. Indeed, the missionary's name had now become a household word for Catholics through almost all the land. Had he died at this early period of his public career, he would still have deserved an honorable place in our church history. Yet, by comparison with what he was destined to do, his work was then only in its infancy.

Far removed from Europe both as to distance and habits of thought, the American Friars Preacher had, up to the date of which we speak, shown slight desire for the degrees of honor conferred by the Order on its subjects as a reward for their worth and ability. Early in the summer of 1881, however, the Most Rev. Joseph Larroca, the first Master General of the Order who came to the United States, arrived in New York to make a visitation of the province. Possibly in commemoration of this fact he wished to honor some of the members of Saint Joseph's Province. Accordingly, as soon as he reached our shores he began to seek information for this purpose.

In the mind of the student of ecclesiastical history great learning and stirring eloquence are inseparably associated with the Order of Saint Dominic. So true is this that the white habit and black mantle of the Friar Preacher at once suggest the academic hall and the pulpit, the learned lecture and the eloquent sermon. The long, thorough course of studies given its young men by the institute, presupposing of course a personal correspondence and application on their part, must cause them to excel in one or both of these fields of intellectual activity.

Founded especially for spreading the Gospel truth, the Order from its earliest days began to frame laws, the purpose of which was to form successful preachers for its active apostolate. The keynote of all such enactments was that, in addition to zeal and an exemplary life, both learning and the gift of eloquence were necessary for the fruitful exercise of so Christ-like a function. The burden of much of the institute's constitutions is largely to inculcate the idea that its friars

must preach no less by their example than by their words; that without erudition it is impossible to explain Christian doctrine to the people as it should be explained to them; that a thorough training in theology is the first milestone in the way that leads to a successful career in the Dominican's prime work—the salvation of souls by the spoken word. Every opportunity was given, every encouragement was held out to those who showed promise for this active ministry. Both to reward their efforts and to place the seal of the Order's approval on their labors the degree or title of Preacher General was often conferred upon those who, besides being noted for their model lives, had preached to the people for some years with marked fruit. The degree was regarded as a pledge of distinction, and carried with it appreciable privileges in the religious body. But that the number of the brethren so honored might not be excessive, it was enacted by law that in no province should its preachers general exceed the number of its convents.

Father Charles H. McKenna, by the time his priorship in Louisville expired, had filled with much credit all the conditions required for the degree of preacher general. His work and life were known not merely to his brethren, but to the country at large. Father Larroca soon learned of this, and it caused him to conceive a strong affection for the pious missioner. But that which appealed with a special force to the visiting Master General, since it gave him the most tangible proof that his American subjects were filled with Saint Dominic's thirst for souls, was the edifying spectacle of some two thousand Holy Name men approaching holy communion in a body in the church of Saint Vin-

cent Ferrer, New York. It was a wondrous sight—one that the holy man had never witnessed before, not even in his native Catholic Spain. It is said that after his return to Rome Father Larroca often spoke of this manifestation of Catholic faith and piety; that he held up the fathers of Saint Joseph's Province as examples to be imitated by the members of the Order the world over in the prosecution of the apostolic side of its life.

The superb scene seems to have confirmed the General in his design of distributing a few of the Order's honors among the members of the American province; for it was then that he suggested that the names of some of the fathers who had signalized themselves in the active ministry and had fulfilled the conditions required to become preachers general, should be proposed for that degree at the approaching chapter over which he was to preside in person. Accordingly, when the various superiors assembled at Saint Vincent Ferrer's (July, 1881) to elect a new provincial, they petitioned that Fathers James V. Edelen, Jeremiah P. Turner, Hugh F. Lilly and Charles H. McKenna be made preachers general for the four convents then in the province—Saint Rose's and Saint Louis Bertrand's in Kentucky, Saint Joseph's in Ohio, and Saint Vincent Ferrer's, New York. It was asked that Father McKenna be appointed to this office for the priory in Louisville for which he had done so much.

Almost immediately on his arrival in the Eternal City, Father Larroca assembled his council, and on September 18, 1881, forwarded Rev. Michael D. Lilly, the newly elected provincial, letters patent constituting the above named priests preachers general. It

was the first time this honor had ever been bestowed upon a Dominican in the United States. When the documents arrived, Father McKenna was engaged on a mission in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. His papers, therefore, were sent by the provincial to Fitchburg with the following characteristically brief letter:

"NEW YORK,
"October 12, 1881.

"*Dear Father McKenna:*

"It is with great pleasure that I have the privilege of sending you the enclosed 'Letters Patent' constituting [you] a Preacher General with all the rights and privileges attached to that honorable and responsible position in our Order. I can hardly tell you how glad I am that you received it, and how sensible I am how deserving I know you to be of it. That you may long continue to labor in the cause of Holy Church and of our holy Order is the wish of your old friend,

"M. D. LILLY."

The document conferring the honor reads:

"*Father Joseph M. Larroca*, Professor of Sacred Theology and humble Master General and Servant of the Order of Friars Preacher, to Our beloved son in God, Father Charles Hyacinth McKenna, of the same Order and of the Province of Saint Joseph, in North America.

"It is proper that those who excel in preaching the Gospel should be invested with special honors and favors. Since, therefore, as we have learned, you have so preached the Word of God for many years, and moved thereto by the request of your Province—first absolving you, Rev. Father Charles Hyacinth McKenna, from all excommunication and other ecclesiastical impediment, should you be bound by any, to the end that these presents may have their effect—, by apostolic authority, these Letters Patent and the power invested in Our Office We institute and make you Preacher General for Our Convent of Saint Louis

Bertrand, with a vote [that is, an elective vote in provincial chapters], and with all the favors, privileges, immunities and exemptions which Preachers General are accustomed and ought to enjoy in Our Order and in your Province. We command, in the name of the Holy Ghost, in virtue of holy obedience and under formal precept, that you accept this office and charge; that you exercise it worthily and with fruit; that you remember it is conferred upon you not for your personal ease, but for the public good of the Order and the Christian Religion. Furthermore, We command all persons subject to Our authority under the same formal precept to receive, treat and honor you as a truly and lawfully instituted Preacher General. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. All things, etc. In testimony whereof, etc.

"Given in Our Convent of Saint Mary of the Minerva, Rome, September 18, 1881.

"FATHER RAYMOND BIANCHI,
"*Procurator General and Vicar of the Master General of the Order.*
"FATHER THOMAS M. GAUDENGI,
"*Master in Theology, Provincial of Dacia and Socius.*"

The novelty of the creation of four preachers general in the province at one time caused no little excitement and gratification. Although the choice of the four men was a popular one, none of the appointments gave greater pleasure than that of Father McKenna. The provincial's letter of congratulation but mildly voiced the sentiments of the brethren in general, while the news of the honor that had come to the distinguished missioner spread rapidly through the country and was the occasion of keen delight to his numerous friends and admirers.

In the letters appointing him a preacher general,

Father McKenna was told that the dignity which had been conferred upon him did not mean that he could now rest from his labors, but that he should make use of the prestige it gave for the good of religion. Literally did he obey this command. Nor was the test of his obedience long delayed, for the next two years were peculiarly trying for the good friar. Through the illness of some of the priests who were wont to aid on the missions, the occupation of others in positions that interfered with this labor, and a temporary scarcity of missionary talent, those who remained at the work were obliged, as he expressed it, to "multiply themselves to prevent a loss of souls and of the Order's good name." It was only by the most strenuous efforts that the difficult, though brief period was happily tided over until some of the former missioners returned to their posts and new recruits could be sent into the field. No one, it is safe to say, could have "multiplied" himself more than did Father McKenna.

It was, therefore, perhaps fortunate that somewhat prior to receiving the degree of preacher general the zealous missionary had been appointed to another post of honor and responsibility. In 1880, while he was still superior of the convent in Louisville, Father McKenna was made head of the Dominican missions east of the Mississippi River, a position that enabled him to accomplish more than he could otherwise have done at this trying juncture. Again and again he received this appointment from successive chapters of the province, holding the office for nearly thirteen years.

The present distinct missionary band, with its headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky, and with the south and near mid-west as the field of its operations, had not

yet come into existence. Thus Father McKenna's position as head of the missions placed under his charge all the fathers engaged in this work east of the Mississippi River and imposed on him the arduous task of accepting and arranging for all Dominican missions given through fully one third of the United States. Creditably indeed did he acquit himself of this grave responsibility. Everywhere the Friars Preacher were in great demand; everywhere they gave satisfaction and received much praise for their zeal and the effectiveness of their labors. During the period covered by this chapter we can trace them at their work from the city of Boston to the banks of the Mississippi—from Buffalo and Detroit to Galveston, Texas. In the accounts of the many missions they gave, no name is mentioned oftener than that of Rev. C. H. McKenna; no priest is spoken of in terms quite so laudatory.

Despite the handicap in numbers, their extraordinary activity attracted the attention of the country from ocean to ocean, causing the editor of the *San Francisco Monitor,* who had written frequent notices of their apostolic labors for the edification of the Catholics of the Pacific coast, to write a summary of the missionary efforts of the Dominicans of the California province for the edification of its readers in the east.[1]

The hard-working head of the missions put forth his best efforts to make their fruitage more abundant, and strove to bind the people closer to Christ and His Blessed Mother through the Holy Name Society and the Rosary Confraternity. He had the fathers under his charge establish both sodalities wherever possible,

[1] *Freeman's Journal,* January, 1882.

and urged them to labor for their increase. The numbers enrolled under the banner of the Holy Name in the places where it was established at this period ran from one hundred to eight hundred; the increase of members in the churches where it previously existed was from one hundred to two hundred. The growth of the Rosary Confraternity was still more noteworthy. In the parishes where it was newly established, from two hundred to over two thousand persons were enrolled, while in those where it already existed, its membership was enlarged by the addition of from three to five hundred names. But three parishes (Saint Joseph's, Somerville, and Saint John's, Clinton,—Massachusetts—, and the Immaculate Conception, Rochester, New York) deserve special mention for the eagerness with which their people joined these two societies. At the last place, indeed, practically the entire congregation was enrolled in them. It is gratifying to note that while Father McKenna and his co-laborers sought earnestly to propagate the Holy Name Society, the Rosary Confraternity and the Angelic Warfare, their broad spirit made them no less zealous to quicken interest in whatever other sodalities they found existing. Other things worthy of notice in these missions are the numerous converts and the throngs of people who approached the sacraments. With good reason might the humble head of the eastern missions have taken an honest pride in the success of the first years of his management.

To appreciate the full meaning of the numbers who approached the sacraments and were enrolled in the Holy Name and Rosary societies at these missions, it must be remembered that frequent communion was by

no means so common in those days as it is now; daily communion was most rare. Yet one of the prime objects of these two sodalities is precisely to foster this Catholic practice. Possibly a taint of Jansenism had been brought to the United States from Continental Europe where the influence of that error was still felt, and this was visible in the rather general custom of receiving the sacraments only at long intervals. This was particularly the case with the men. Besides, the rigid formalities with which Rome then surrounded the two confraternities tended rather to hinder than to further their propaganda. For these rules, in addition to preventing the organization of the Holy Name Society or the Rosary Confraternity in more than one church in a city, be it ever so large, practically denied the hierarchy and the diocesan clergy any rights in their propagation other than to consent to their establishment and to foster them once they had been established—a circumstance that tended to dry up the fountains of sympathy so necessary for their growth. All this gives added significance to the increase of their membership at this period and for some years to come. It also shows the zeal of the fathers laboring under the direction of Father McKenna to promote frequent communion and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, which is, after all, the center from which all other devotions of the Church radiate, as it is the end to which they lead.

Now that he had been appointed head of the principal missionary band, Father McKenna did not neglect to use all the influence this position gave him to obtain the withdrawal of the restrictions surrounding the Holy Name Society and the Rosary Confraternity,

that he might establish them wherever they were desired. But many years were to pass before he procured this favor. Rome moves slowly. Hence, although it had been agreed in principle at a prior date to allow these societies to exist in many churches of the same city, provided special permission was asked in each instance, further powers were then denied. While this put the good missioner to great inconvenience, his zeal shrank before no difficulty in the accomplishment of his end. Never did he hesitate to write for the required leave when he saw an opportunity of erecting one or both of his cherished confraternities in a parish.

While it was by no means one of his greatest missions during this period, an account of that given at Oliphant, Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1882 both gives a fair idea of the distinguished friar's preaching at this time and makes a fitting closing for the present chapter. We select this mission because Oliphant's Catholic population was largely composed of laboring men—the class among whom the holy priest loved to work. To move such an audience to tears is indeed a triumph; but it was not an unusual thing at Father McKenna's missions to see the strongest men—even hardened sinners—shed copious tears during his sermons. Of the apostle's labors in the Pennsylvania mining town on this occasion, the *Catholic Review's* correspondent writes:

"OLIPHANT,
"Nov. 15, 1882.

"The mission conducted by the Dominican Fathers closed here on Sunday evening, Nov. 5th. Throughout the entire mission, which lasted two weeks, the deepest interest was manifested by the whole congregation. Whether at early Mass at five o'clock

in the morning, or at the service in the evening, the church was always filled with eager, anxious people to receive the instructions and blessings given by those zealous, holy men. The sermons were delivered by Fathers McKenna and Turner, and each subject was presented in that clear, eloquent and forceful manner which carried with it conviction to the heart of every listener. Father McKenna, particularly, possesses those talents which make him a most pleasing and effective preacher; and on several occasions his hearers were moved to tears by the earnestness of his manner and sincerity of purpose with which he entered upon his discourse. Take it all in all, it was the best mission we have ever had in this part of the valley, and one of invaluable benefit to the Catholic portion of the community. The good work done by the Dominican Fathers will long be remembered, and have its beneficial influence among us; and the thanks of the congregation are due their faithful pastor, the Rev. P. O'Rorke, for bringing into their midst such earnest missionaries."[2]

True to the spirit and traditions of the religious organization to which he belonged, the tireless head of the missions, now that he had a freer hand, sought, in addition to his other labors, more than ever to extend the blessings of his institute to the faithful. Thus, for instance, although he had, from the commencement of his apostolic life, earnestly propagated the Third Order of Saint Dominic living in the world, Father McKenna now began to promote it with renewed care. In truth, from this time until he was no longer able to toil, his zeal in this sacred cause for good seems to have grown with the passing years, causing him to become a real apostle of the secular Third Order in the United States. But of these varied efforts for the welfare of souls we shall speak more at length in the next chapter.

[2] *Catholic Review*, December 2, 1882.

CHAPTER XV.

A VARIED APOSTOLATE.

(1883–1885)

FAITHFUL to his vocation, the earnest Friar Preacher kept steadily at his post of duty. From east to west, from north to south, he traversed and re-traversed the country to fill his engagements for missions in widely separated parts. His work was trying in the extreme, but the gratifying results that everywhere accompanied his apostolate sustained him in his exertions.

Father McKenna's travels and his efforts to reclaim or to save the faithful from the thraldom of sin were not unlike those of Bartholomew de las Casas to free or to protect the Indians of Spanish America from enslavement. Though he was cast in a milder mould, as he lived in a milder age, than his confrère of old—though his life and his language were not so bold or so picturesque as those of the medieval friar—the missioner's zeal was not less ardent, nor his energy less tireless. While his labors, because more spiritual and less humanitarian than those of Las Casas, were not so likely to appeal to the sympathy of men or to make history, yet to the Catholic's way of thinking they deserved as great a reward from the Lord of all. Of Father McKenna, indeed, it may be said that his was one of those few lives that are almost beyond biography, and that the histories of the Dominican missions, the Holy Name Society and the Rosary Confraternity would have to be written in order to illustrate it.

The friar's work as a missioner, one would think, should have satisfied even the most zealous ambassador of Christ. Yet he was ever in search either of new ways of advancing the cause of the missions or of new instruments for doing good. Thus we now find him editing another book towards the translation of which he had himself contributed. This was the well known *Sinner's Guide* by the grand old Dominican master of the spiritual life, Louis of Granada.[1] This new rendition of *The Sinner's Guide* was warmly received by religious communities, brought consolation to many spiritual-minded persons, and aided greatly in arousing fervor during missions and retreats.

Having gradually added to his supply of lectures, Father McKenna appears to have given at this period more time to this particular work than in previous years. This was possibly because he was now freer to do so in consequence of the increase in the number of missionaries. About this time also he began to speak on a national evil that had grown to such proportions as to engross the attention of all classes—marriage and divorce. His lecture on this subject became immensely popular, and for many years he was often solicited to deliver it. It was given in many parts of the United States, was received everywhere with applause and accorded highly favorable comment by the public press. Other topics on which he lectured with notable success were different phases of Ireland's history and faith—subjects then in greater demand than

[1] The *Sinner's Guide* is perhaps the best known of the many excellent spiritual writings of the Venerable Louis of Granada. It had been abominably rendered into English at an early date. Father McKenna used this old English version and a French translation in getting out his edition.

today—and various points of Catholic doctrine and practice.

He also appears, perhaps for the same reason, to have preached special sermons more frequently than before—to have been more in demand as the speaker for such occasions as the laying of corner-stones or the dedication of churches. But besides being a priest of intense zeal and piety, Father McKenna was a most charitable man, and for this reason his lectures and special discourses were frequently delivered in behalf of some Christian charity. This kind of work, however, he considered as secondary in his life in comparison with that of gathering souls to Christ through parochial missions. Rarely, therefore, could he be induced to accept invitations to lecture or to preach such special sermons, however strong their appeal, if to do so would in any way interfere with his missionary work.

Societies for men—especially for young men, for whom he had a partiality—were another matter in which he was keenly concerned. Father McKenna felt that these societies were an undisguised blessing; he advocated them strongly, and his services, when time permitted, were freely at their disposal. He knew how attractive to men societies in general are, and believed that such organizations, under proper auspices, would be a means of preventing many Catholic men from joining the secret societies banned by the Church. The missionary often lectured for the benefit of the Catholic Knights of America, in whom he was deeply interested, for he was convinced that, like the Knights of Columbus, if conducted along sane lines, they could and would do much good for the Church

in the United States and for the male portion of her membership.

Another society—more limited in its scope and more local in its influence—that elicited Father McKenna's concern at this time was the Saint Vincent Ferrer's Union attached to the church of the same name in New York. This association, organized late in 1883 or early in 1884, has since come to be known as the Dominican Lyceum. It is composed of Catholic young men; its purpose is their religious, mental and social improvement. From its beginning it appealed to Father McKenna, and to enable it to secure a reading room and acquire the nucleus of a library he delivered, February 17, 1884, his noted lecture "Marriage and Divorce" in the Church of Saint Vincent Ferrer. Nor did he lose his interest in the society as long as he lived.

Through the impulse given them by the head of the eastern missions we find interest in the Rosary and the Holy Name societies becoming more and more pronounced through the country. Besides the efforts for their extension made at the missions, the Dominicans, under the leadership of Father McKenna, had now begun to conduct retreats and special spiritual exercises of a week's duration for Holy Name men and rosarians with the best of results.

But Father McKenna clearly distinguished between Catholic societies and societies for Catholics. To the former belonged the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society—to the latter, organizations of the character of the Catholic Knights of America, the Knights of Columbus and the Saint Vincent Ferrer's Union. He was strongly averse to seeing the Rosary

and the Holy Name sodalities turned from their strictly religious aims into channels of church aid or benevolent purposes. Other societies, he felt, should be established for such ends, and these two confraternities devoted exclusively to their specific work of sanctifying souls. To save souls, he maintained, was their sole mission; to divert them to other purposes were to drag them from their high spiritual position, lower them in the esteem of the faithful and lessen their efficacy.

In his labors as a missionary Father McKenna discovered that in many places both the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society had been formed without observing the requirements of the Church. In these cases, of course, the sodalities were devoid of proper legal standing and their members deprived of the many indulgences or favors with which they are enriched. In his charity the zealous priest either used his own faculties or wrote to Rome for authorization—as the circumstances demanded—to heal these irregularities wherever found. And to prevent such recurrences he endeavored not only by word of mouth, but through the Catholic press and leaflets which he sent broadcast, to make the law governing the establishment of the Dominican Rosary and the Holy Name more generally known.

At this period also we find Father McKenna frequently requested to give a course of doctrinal lectures during his missions. As these requests came either from non-Catholics themselves or from Catholics who desired to have the teachings of the Church explained to their Protestant friends, it is quite probable that they were due at least in part to the report that had

gone abroad of his sermon at the obsequies of Jerome Collins of which we have presently to speak. These doctrinal discourses which, for want of time at any other part of the day, had to be delivered early in the afternoon, not only attracted much attention and drew large crowds, but resulted in many conversions to the faith. But as this addition to his already heavy burden made serious inroads on the missionary's strength, he was obliged after some years to discontinue them.

The event we are now to record gained a wide notoriety at the time and brought a personal knowledge of Father McKenna's eloquent oratory into circles seldom reached by him. Although non-Catholics often attended his missions, sermons or lectures, his work had been confined mostly to those of his own faith. Catholic pulpits were his ordinary rostrum, the Gospels of the Sundays or points of Catholic doctrine the usual subjects of his discourses. The event of which we have now to speak, however, was of both a national and a sensational character. For the reputation of both the Church and himself it demanded the best that was in the noted preacher, and his success was such that the occasion requires a special brief word in his biography.

In the summer of 1879 the interest of the world was aroused over a polar expedition fitted out by James Gordon Bennett, proprietor of the New York *Herald.* The staunch little vessel "Jeannette" sailed from San Francisco, July 9 of that year, under the command of Lieutenant George W. DeLong, U. S. N., who had been the navigating officer of the "Juniata" in 1873, and had visited the frozen north in search of the "Polaris" which had been lost on a similar expedition

two years before. DeLong was the first to attempt to explore the arctic regions via the Behring Straits. Like many of the preceding efforts to discover the North Pole, the daring exploit was to end in disaster. The "Jeannette" was crushed in the ice, in 77° 15′ N., 155° E., June 13, 1881. Retracing their steps, fourteen of the explorers reached the mouth of the Lena, Siberia. Thence two were sent on for relief and reached safety. The others died of cold and starvation in the fall of 1881. Their bodies were recovered, March 23, 1882, and sent back to the United States. Their arrival in New York in February, 1884, again engrossed the attention of the country.

Among the brave dead was one Jerome J. Collins, a member of the Dominican parish of Saint Vincent Ferrer, New York, and an intimate friend of Father McKenna. Collins was an exemplary Catholic, a man of science, a reporter on the New York *Herald,* and the founder of that paper's weather service. He stood high in his profession and community. Of Irish birth, his genial Celtic temperament and splendid character had won him a wide popularity in the great metropolis. For these reasons, no greater honor was shown any of the heroes of the ill-fated "Jeannette" than was bestowed upon Collins. Saint Patrick's Cathedral was chosen as the church best suited for his mass of requiem, and Father McKenna who had been the friend and confessor of both Mr. Collins and his mother, was selected by Cardinal McCloskey as the orator of the occasion.

The solemnity of the event which took place, February 23, 1884, was enhanced by the fact that by the side of Jerome Collins' bier stood that of his mother

who had died in the meantime. After the mass the bodies of both were to be sent to Ireland, there to be laid to rest by the banks of the River Lee. The sensational nature of the occasion drew people of every creed and walk of life to the cathedral until the majestic Gothic structure was crowded to overflowing.

During his lifetime Collins never failed to visit Father McKenna, whenever he knew that he was in New York, to bare his life to him as his trusted confessor and spiritual adviser. Indeed, one of the last persons the explorer went to see before starting on his northern journey was his priestly counselor, and his errand was to prepare his soul for the perilous expedition. The relations between the two men were most intimate. Father McKenna's love for his friends was as tender as his longing to do good was intense. Thus while his affection for his two deceased friends appealed to the great orator's heart, the multitude of eager listeners told the zealous priest that here was an opportunity to do good. That he rose to the occasion was the verdict of all who heard him. His strong, resonant voice, penetrating into the most remote corners of the vast cathedral, swayed the great throng of fully five thousand persons representing every shade of religious belief and disbelief. Eloquent speaker that he was, the holy friar possibly surpassed himself in this oration. There was perhaps not one in the vast audience who did not shed copious tears. Numbers have told the writer that Father McKenna's sermon over the remains of Jerome Collins and his mother excelled in point of oratory anything they had ever heard.

The New York *Herald* of February 24, 1884, in its account of Mr. Collins' obsequies, published rather

lengthy extracts from the missionary's sermon. While quite inaccurate and imperfect, as quotations from Catholic sermons in secular papers generally are, these citations still serve to show Father McKenna at his work of gathering souls to Christ, and to give an idea of his style of oratory when not speaking on a purely religious subject.

We regret, however, that lack of space does not permit us to give the reader even an outline of this noted oration. Suffice it to say that the missionary—doubtless for the benefit of the non-Catholic portion of his audience—took occasion to speak at some length on the position of the Church with regard to science and scientists, and explained the meaning of her rites and prayers over her departed members. Perhaps, indeed, this part of his discourse appealed not less forcibly to those not of the faith than the friar's eloquent description of the dangers of a polar expedition at that day, the bravery and Christian character of Jerome Collins, and the scene of the final separation between the affectionate mother and devoted son.

During the sermon the stillness of the great cathedral was broken only by the voice of the speaker or an occasional sob in the audience. When it was finished, there came a hush. Everyone was plainly disappointed that the gifted priest had not spoken at greater length —a sure proof that he had reached the hearts of all and satisfied the most sanguine expectation of Cardinal McCloskey who had chosen him as the orator of the occasion.

Father McKenna was not a litterateur. His busy life left him little time for the acquirement of the niceties of literature. While he studied and read much,

by way of preparing himself for his work, he did not always pay sufficient attention to elegance of diction. Yet at times his rolling periods were almost classic; and his sermons and lectures were always full of thought. This, coupled with the simplicity of his language and the inimitable way in which he gave expression to his ideas, made ample amends for whatever was lacking from a literary point of view. And, after all, it is a rare thing to find a good orator who is also a good writer. Father McKenna was an orator both by divine gift and by training. Those who knew him, therefore, were not surprised that his oration at the funeral of Jerome Collins, almost extemporaneous as it was, should have so carried away the distinguished assemblage. How it appealed to the newspaper world may be seen from the fact that the *Herald's* account of Mr. Collins' obsequies is longer than that of those of Lieutenant DeLong, who was in charge of the expedition; and that the extracts from the friar's discourse are as copious as those from the eulogy pronounced by the noted Bishop Potter over the commander of the "Jeannette" and six of his comrades. No doubt, too, the pious missioner's efforts did much towards toning down prejudice and giving courage to those of his own faith. Of those who were present on the occasion several have told the writer that they were never so proud of their religion as while listening to Father McKenna's discourse.

So signal a triumph might have turned the head of many another. Not so with our humble Dominican. Though he rejoiced in the good he had accomplished, he referred it to God, the source of all blessings, whose servant he was. To Father McKenna one success was

but an inspiration to another in the cause of his Divine Master.

But it is now time to return to the missions which were ever uppermost in the friar's mind, and which until the fall of 1900 took up by far the greater portion of his apostolic life. Like those that preceded them, the years 1884 and 1885 were exceeding productive of good. The seed sown by Father McKenna and his co-laborers fell upon hungry soil that gave it deep root, enabling it to produce results an hundred fold. Because, however, of the number of these spiritual exercises, we can do no more than merely touch upon some in which he took a conspicuous part.

One of his great missions belonging to 1884 was given in the church of Saint Vincent Ferrer, New York, which opened on March 23 and closed on April 6. The interest it aroused brought people from almost every part of the city. Thousands approached the sacraments; the Rosary and the Holy Name confraternities were much enlarged; many wayward Catholics were brought to a sense of their religious duties and prepared for confirmation, and a number of non-Catholics started on the road to Rome. The good effected by this mission so impressed Archbishop Corrigan that he attended its closing, gave the papal benediction and addressed the vast congregation.

A true Dominican, Father McKenna was deeply interested in the Third Order of Saint Dominic. Wherever he went, he was anxious to receive into it those whom he judged to be of a temperament suited to its aims. A book in which he was accustomed to write the names of those whom he admitted into the Third Order, together with the files of Catholic papers,

serves not only to reveal his zeal in this regard but to show the wide expanse of territory covered by him in his active ministry. We find him, for instance, in October, 1884, going from the east to Louisville, Kentucky, and thence directly to Lowell, Massachusetts. Again, in January, 1885, we may follow him from New York to Memphis, Tennessee, where the Catholics turned out *en masse* to attend the spiritual exercises; and from Memphis to Newport, Rhode Island. Again, in the fall of 1885, we see him going from Lynn, Massachusetts, to Zanesville, Ohio, from Zanesville to Springfield, Kentucky, and thence back to Newburyport, Massachusetts. At all these places he was accorded a welcome as warm as that given him at Saint Vincent Ferrer's, New York. Yet these are but instances of the holy man's perpetual labors and journeys for the salvation of souls.

The greater part of this period, however, was devoted to New York and New England, where he then enjoyed his greatest popularity. The cities of Boston and Brooklyn appear to have entered into something of a spiritual rivalry to profit by his ministrations. It was in Saint Augustine's Church, South Boston, that he gave, during the Lent of 1885, one of his most successful missions of that year. Owing to the crowds that attended, it was necessary to double the exercises that all might be given an opportunity to make the mission. An unprecedented number received the sacraments. Many who up to that time had not been known as Catholics, came to be reconciled with their God—one hundred and eighty-five such were prepared for confirmation—, thirteen converts were started on their way to the Church and one thousand persons en-

tered the confraternity of the Rosary, while several hundred joined that of the Holy Name.

This spiritual revival was immediately followed by another in the adjoining town of Cambridge, where the elite of the university city were aroused to enthusiasm by the preaching of the fathers and the course of doctrinal lectures delivered by Father McKenna in the afternoons. From Cambridge the zealous friar went to Saint Agnes' Church, Brooklyn. The mission at Saint Agnes' commenced on Palm Sunday and continued for two weeks. As contemporary accounts both show him and his co-laborers at their work and give an idea of the secret of their success, we cannot refrain from reproducing that which follows:

"Father McKenna, O.P., assisted by Fathers Turner, O'Neil and O'Mahoney, of the same Order, have been conducting a mission at St. Agnes' Church, Brooklyn, during the past week, and it has been attended by large congregations. Father McKenna has aged somewhat of late years. His hair is grayer than when he conducted the last mission at St. Agnes' Church four years ago, but his voice has lost none of its clearness, and his preaching none of its persuasive power. The crowds hung upon his words with the same delight that has characterized them ever since the eminent Dominican first started on his great life's work of reclaiming souls. He is ably assisted by the young priests whose names are given above. I could not but think, as I listened to the sermons that these men preach, as I observed the crowds that flock to hear them and the effects that follow their utterances, that the secret of their power lies in their simplicity. These are not theoretical exhorters, hurling Jeremiads over the heads of their audiences, but men who interpret and expound the teachings of God in words so plain, direct, simple, and withal so eloquent, that the most ignorant may follow them. The highest

tributes to the Catholic missionaries of this and other Orders are to be found in the results that they bring about."[2]

It was shortly after this mission that the writer had the happiness of again hearing and seeing Father McKenna at his favorite work of reclaiming souls, and of making the acquaintance of another of the missionaries engaged at Saint Agnes'. As our recollection, which is still vivid, recalls them, the appreciation given above is not exaggerated. They were both eloquent in their simplicity, and simple even in their eloquence. Again, we can never forget how Father McKenna illustrated the points of his sermons by quotations from Scripture or by examples from the lives of the saints. It was his aim ever to keep within the mental grasp of the lowliest of his audience. But through his mastery of the art of oratory this he could do without prejudice to eloquence, and at the same time entertain and instruct the most highly cultivated. There were those, indeed, who held that this happy combination of simplicity with eloquence was one of the saintly friar's most striking characteristics as a public speaker.

More than once has the reader's attention been called to Father McKenna's preference to labor among men. Perhaps one of the most noteworthy efforts in all his years as a missionary in this line was at a mission for the men of the cathedral parish of Albany, June, 1885. The fervor and devotion manifested by the three thousand who attended it so impressed him that he long retained a strong affection for New York's capital city.

To have attempted anything more than a bare outline of Father McKenna's labors during these three years would have made the present chapter unduly

[2] *Freeman's Journal*, April 11, 1885, quoted from *The Catholic Examiner*.

long. Whatever he did seemed to be blessed. Nor is this to be wondered at, since in all things he was wholly a man of God, seeking the things of heaven.

From the beginning of his missionary career his high spirituality and burning zeal inspired everyone not only with confidence, but with the belief that he possessed the secret of goodness, piety and mercy which he longed to impart to others. All flocked to him as to a true priest who stood between them and God, whose prayers were powerful, and whose pleadings would open for them the way to divine compassion and pardon. With age and experience his reputation for supramundane wisdom, holiness and eloquence had grown until now, in the zenith of his strength and glory, he stood to the forefront as one of the great ecclesiastics of his age and country. Withal one of the missionary's most winsome traits was his guileless simplicity which prevented him from realizing, or even suspecting, the place he held in the hearts of men or the influence he wielded over them.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAGNETIC ZEAL: FIRST VISIT TO ROME.

(1886–1887)

FATHER MCKENNA possessed an extraordinary personal magnetism which not only drew people to him, but caused their affection for him to grow stronger with intimate acquaintance. It was the more attractive because natural and wholly unrecognized by himself. This may perhaps explain why pastors, once they had secured his services, were always anxious to secure them again and again. Thus, although nine months had not elapsed since he had conducted a mission there, we find him in the last days of December, 1885, giving a week's retreat to the Holy Name men of Saint Agnes' Church, Brooklyn, of which his friend, Rev. James F. Duffy, was pastor.

This retreat began a busy season's work for Father McKenna, for from that time until the middle of June, 1886, he and his confrères gave thirty-eight missions in the eastern states alone, exclusive of spiritual exercises such as that of which we have just spoken. Nearly all these missions were of two weeks' duration, while from two to six missionaries were employed on each of them. Thus the head of the missionary band had little time for rest. The leading sermons to the Holy Name men of Saint Agnes', which may serve to give an idea of the character of those generally preached by the saintly clergyman in his work of reclaiming souls, were: "Object and Necessity of a Re-

treat"; "The Two Roads of Life"; "Human and Divine Law"; "A Great Social Evil"; "Man, When True, and When False, to his Dignity"; "Society's greatest Safeguard"; "Thoughts on the Future"; "Closing Admonitions." These topics, indeed, when treated as Father McKenna knew so well how to treat them, were well calculated to produce deep and lasting impressions on the Catholic mind.

That he exerted a strong influence over those of the faith—especially men—, and that he wielded this influence with all his might for the welfare of their souls is common knowledge. In whatever Father McKenna was engaged his one thought was to make people better. Although he did much towards propagating the devotion of the Rosary, and although multitudes attended his missions, hung on his eloquent words, or flocked around his confessional, perhaps the fruits of his labors in behalf of the Holy Name were even more patent. This was because the effects of his other apostolates were more confined to the soul, and thus known to God rather than to man, while the notable decrease in the use of profane and indecent language that was brought about through the Holy Name Society was apparent to all. The *Freeman's Journal* of that day frequently comments on the blessing it has been to society. We cannot, indeed, pass over here an editorial of that paper wherein the observant Mr. McMaster tells us, in his characteristically quaint, picturesque language, his personal experience in this matter.

"Next Sunday [writes the distinguished editor] is the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. It is grateful,—moreover it seems an obligation for us,—to take the timely occasion of speaking

of the *Confraternity of the Holy Name,*—established in so many Parishes; and, thank God, extending. We can give our personal testimony to the great good this Confraternity has accomplished, in the last fifteen years, in New York and Brooklyn. It is, we cannot recall how many years ago,—that we said, in these columns, that the *greatest* sin of the Irish, in New York, and of their children,—was not,—in itself at least,—the abuse of intoxicating liquors,—as many assert,—but that it was *blasphemy!* The horrible use of the adorable name of Jesus, and of His Mother,—in rough and impious talk. It has been most delightful to have noticed,—among working-men on the streets, —and among the young boys,—bootblacks, news-venders, and the like,—the great change that has been wrought. May this Society, or Sodality, go on, increase and prosper. It is true the blasphemous use of the Holy Name was the result of heedlessness, and want of instruction, rather than of any *intention* to blaspheme. But, all the same,—God will not hold guiltless those who thus idly mock Him."[1]

From the columns of the same paper we learn that it was through the Holy Name Society that the edifying Catholic custom of raising the hat or bowing the head in reverence when one hears the sacred name of Christ pronounced, was introduced into the cities of New York and Brooklyn. And may we not give much of the credit of this to the great Dominican missionary? Father McKenna's labors in 1886, like those of the preceding year, were given mostly to the eastern states. The churches of Brooklyn, of Boston and its vicinity again reaped rich fruits from them. But now the city of New York, where the province had won its first laurels in the east as a missionary power, became a notable center of his activities.

In many places both Catholics and non-Catholics,

[1] *Freeman's Journal,* January 9, 1886.

attracted by his fame, came to attend the missions in numbers so large that double services were often necessitated. In this way the labors of the priests were multiplied, as really two missions were given simultaneously where there was supposed to be but one. A notable example of this we find at Saint Patrick's Church, Boston, in the February of 1886. As the sacred edifice, although large, was by no means adequate for the accommodation of all who came to make the mission, it was necessary to have one set of serices for the married women and another for the unmarried during the first week, and to adopt the same method for the men during the week allotted to them. Thus four weeks' work was crowded into two. It was estimated that about five thousand persons listened to the sermons each day. In the same city missions for Rev. John Delahunty, at Saint Francis de Sales, and for Rev. Doctor Byrne, pastor of Saint Joseph's, in the months of October and November, brought almost as great multitudes and were almost as rich in results.

In Brooklyn the mission at Saint Ann's (in March and April), that at the Church of the Nativity (in April) and that at Saint Vincent de Paul's (in December) deserve special mention. They created a commendable enthusiasm, attracting the faithful from many parts of the city. The eager throngs that jammed these churches were as a tonic to Father McKenna and caused him to rise to the heights of his eloquence. The mission at Saint Mary's, Grand Street, New York, was not less noteworthy. In announcing his mission, Rev. Nicholas J. Hughes, pastor of Saint Mary's, thus wrote—doubtless in order to

draw numbers to his own church—of that which had shortly preceded it at Saint Ann's, Brooklyn:

"Rev. Father McKenna, O.P., one of the greatest preachers of the Dominican Order since the days of the famous Father Tom Burke, is to open a mission in this church on the second of the next month with several other clergymen of the same Order. Their success recently in St. Ann's Church, corner of Front and Gold streets, Brooklyn, gratified the pastor of that parish very much, as hundreds approached the altar-rail, who would hardly think of doing so, were it not for the untiring efforts of the Dominican Fathers during the late mission."[2]

Yet other missions of this year in which Father McKenna took part, and of which he was wont to speak as being specially blessed by heaven, were those of the cathedrals of Hartford and Providence; the Dominican churches of Saint Dominic, Washington, D. C., and of Saint Mary, New Haven; Saint Malachy's, Philadelphia, Saint Mary's, Yonkers, Saint Patrick's, Fall River, Saint John's, Peabody, and the Most Precious Blood, Hyde Park—the last three in Massachusetts. In many of these places the fathers, unable themselves to hear the confessions of all who flocked to the sacred tribunal, were obliged to call to their assistance the clergy attached to the various churches in which the missions were given.

But the missions at the cathedrals of Providence and Hartford and that at Saint Malachy's, Philadelphia, had other results than the usual spiritual ones—results of which it falls within the province of our biography to speak.

The reader has seen how the candid simplicity, the unpretentious piety and zeal of Father McKenna

[2] *The Catholic Review*, April 17, 1886.

gained for him the friendship of nearly all the clergymen for whom he labored—pastors and curates alike. It was at the mission given at Saint Malachy's, beginning October 31, 1886, that a close friendship arose between him and the present archbishop of Philadelphia, the Most Rev. Edmond F. Prendergast, pastor of that church at the time. It was a friendship that was broken only by the death of the great missionary. The success of the mission may be judged by the following account given of it in the diocesan paper, which we reproduce because it appears to be from the pen of Father McKenna himself.

"A splendid example of piety and devotion was shown during the last week by the people of this parish in their very large attendance at the exercises of the Jubilee Mission. The church was every evening filled to crowding, and there were also large congregations at all the Masses. Nearly all the people of proper age must have approached the Sacraments. The Dominican Fathers McKenna and O'Neil, who conducted the Retreat, will, wherever they go hereafter, be able to give an excellent account of the piety of Philadelphia Catholics as shown by those of St. Malachy's parish."[3]

Though the humble friar seldom sent an account of his apostolic labors to the papers, that given above would seem to be from his pen. Its style resembles his, while it was quite characteristic of his humility to attribute all the credit of the good accomplished by missions to the people and to claim none for himself or his fellow-workers. If the contribution be his, it was probably inspired by his love for the pastor of Saint Malachy's. But what a striking contrast between this entry of the friar into the City of Brotherly Love and

[3] *The Catholic Standard,* November 13, 1886.

his arrival there as a penniless immigrant boy in the August of 1851! Now he had seen the realization of the dreams of his youth. Dreams they were that had their part in bringing him to the United States, but dreams that seemed destined never to be fulfilled when he landed on American soil five and thirty years before.

Prior to this mission for Father Prendergast, the Dominicans had often performed similar labors in various parts of Pennsylvania, particularly in the vicinity of Philadelphia, but that at Saint Malachy's was always considered by Father McKenna as preparing the way for their phenomenal success in the Quaker city at a later date.

The mission at the cathedral of Hartford began on February 28, and closed on March 14. Father McKenna, the head of the missionary band, had labored for Doctor McMahon in the same capacity when the bishop was rector of a church in New Bedford, Massachusetts. There the two had become fast friends. The friar had also formed a close friendship, and under similar circumstances, with Rev. William A. Harty, who had lately been appointed rector of the cathedral. This was while Father Harty was pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Waterbury, Connecticut, where sixteen years before the zealous missioner had begun his extraordinary apostolate. In Hartford the bonds of these friendships were drawn still tighter, with the result that the province was soon offered a place in the diocese.

Saint Mary's Church, New Haven, which had been the field of another of Father McKenna's earliest successes, had become hopelessly involved in debt. The

knowledge of the hold the Friars Preacher had gained on the people there during missions given to them, coupled with the enthusiasm caused by the mission at the cathedral of Hartford, suggested to Father Harty that these men would not only be acceptable to Saint Mary's parish, but might solve the problem of freeing it from debt. Accordingly, he recommended that the church be given to the Dominicans. This was done, and the experiment proved not only successful with regard to the financial situation, but eminently satisfactory to good Bishop McMahon.

During the mission at Hartford Father McKenna made another intimate and lifelong friend. This was the Right Rev. Thomas J. Shahan, the present learned rector of the Catholic University of America and titular bishop of Germanicopolis. Father Shahan was then a young priest but shortly returned from the College of the Propaganda, where he had won distinguished academic laurels. As he was chancellor of the diocese and secretary to Bishop McMahon, he lived at the episcopal residence attached to the cathedral. Doctor Shahan, whose esteem for Father McKenna was the highest, thus tells us how he first met and learned to admire and cherish the saintly priest.

"It was early in 1886 that I first met Father McKenna. It was shortly before the Dominicans were established in St. Mary's Parish, New Haven, Connecticut, by Bishop McMahon, at the instance and recommendation of Father William Harty, rector of St. Joseph's Cathedral, Hartford, Connecticut. Father Harty invited the Dominicans to give a mission at the cathedral, and Father McKenna was sent, with Fathers De Cantillon, Murphy and O'Neil. The enthusiasm was boundless, particularly for Father McKenna who seemed tireless in his zeal, espe-

cially in the pulpit and the confessional. In both places he seemed truly a man of God. He was wont to hear confessions in the open sanctuary of the basement, for the cathedral was not yet open to public worship. It was touching to see him seated at a prie-dieu, while beside him knelt some big man humbly confessing his sins, the Father's arm thrown about the penitent's neck who meanwhile shed tears of repentance and joy. His fine voice filled easily the large basement of the cathedral, and he seemed to do the greater part of the preaching, especially the evening sermons. His unction and his eloquence were remarkable, and I think I never heard the Word of God preached with more power and effect.

"His influence over Catholic laymen was most noteworthy. I have known several to whom he was spiritual guide and intimate friend, and who eagerly watched his coming to their respective cities, in order to renew their religious relations with him. This was notably the case of Mr. William U. Downey, of Washington, D. C., known as 'The Prisoners' Friend.' Father McKenna guided this good man along the way of Christian charity for the welfare of the prisoners in the District jail and of poor tramps and unemployed men during times of depression.

"In Father McKenna I ever noticed a deep humility, mildness and simplicity of manners, an affable and persuasive exterior, and a very tender love of souls. Like many others, I thought he should have spared himself more, but he could never take thought of self, being bent on the service of God and his neighbor. His heart went out in sympathy to all good works, and he never refused assistance or advice to any one who approached him for such purposes. In a word, he seemed to me, in the thirty odd years I knew him, to be a model priest and a most saintly religious, an exemplar of Christian zeal and charity, and an ardent apostle of the honor and glory of his Divine Master."[4]

It was on May 16, 1886, that the province took charge of Saint Mary's Church, New Haven. Early

[4] Letter of March 27, 1916.

the next month a mission was given there—largely to win the good graces of the people that thus they might the more readily co-operate with the wishes of the bishop of the diocese. Father McKenna was the leader. It was a happy thought, for such was the enthusiasm aroused that the great debt of the parish began at once to decrease. It was then decided to station the head of the missions in New Haven; this, however, proved impracticable and he never received his papers of assignment.[5]

But another mission at the cathedral of Providence, immediately preceding that in New Haven, seemed to threaten for a time to put an end to Father McKenna's missionary labors. It had been frequently predicted that he would be chosen some day for a bishopric. Nothing could have been farther from his own thoughts or more against his wishes; and yet, as he fancied that such rumors were but idle gossip, he did not suffer them to disturb his mind or to prevent him from going about his accustomed work for souls. The mission in the Providence cathedral extended from May 23 to June 6, 1886. Here again his success was unprecedented. Five days later, Bishop Hendricken, one of his earliest and most intimate clerical friends, passed away. When, therefore, the question of selecting a successor to Doctor Hendricken arose, the memory of the missioner's fruitful labors at the cathedral and elsewhere brought his name into prominence in that connection and he learned that he was chosen as one of the candidates for the bishopric of Providence.

This news caused the humble missionary profound

[5] The question of assigning Father McKenna to Saint Mary's, New Haven, was so nearly settled that we find him for a time directing petitions for missions to be sent to that convent.

uneasiness, since he had firmly resolved to live and to die in the lowly station he had chosen in the beginning. He made up his mind that nothing short of positive obedience would ever induce him to exchange the life of a religious for the more exalted position of a bishop. He felt, too,—and probably with good reason—that he was not endowed with those peculiar talents required for the efficient government of a diocese. For these reasons, he stormed heaven with prayer that one of the other candidates (all of whom were his friends) might receive the appointment, and that thus he might be spared the refusal upon which he had determined, in case of his own nomination. The holy man's heart was disconsolate until, in the spring of 1887, he learned to his delight of the appointment of the present incumbent, the Right Rev. Matthew Harkins, as the new ordinary of Providence.

In addition to his accustomed apostolates, Father McKenna had long been in great demand as a conductor of retreats for sisters, especially for those of his own Order. To this work he gave much of his time during the summer months when free from the missions. Not infrequently, too, he found time during the year for similar religious exercises in clerical seminaries. But it was not until this year (1886) that we have found any mention of him giving a retreat to diocesan clergy. The first was for the diocese of Hartford, and was given at the request of his friend, Bishop McMahon. From this time, however, his services were often requested for this labor, and everywhere he gave the greatest satisfaction. In his character, in that indefinable something possessed by him which we call personal magnetism, and in the evident, earnest piety

that sat so gracefully upon him, there was a force that won the hearts of the clergy. To this day, indeed, it is not unusual to hear priests in different parts of the country say that the best retreat they ever made was under the direction of "good old Father McKenna."

In this work, as in all that he did, the hand of God was plainly with the apostolic religious, giving fruit to his earnest efforts—broadening and strengthening his influence with the anointed of Christ for the good of the Church in America.

As Bishop Shahan has truly said, Father McKenna could never be induced to think of himself. His heart was set first and always on the salvation of his fellowmen—on the glory of God and His Church. With these thoughts uppermost in his mind he continued his labors with unabated zeal, even when it was clear to all that he needed relaxation. We shall, however, mention but three of the missions in which he took part from September, 1886, to June, 1887. Two of these were given early in the latter year for the new parishes of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Brooklyn, and Saint Raphael, New York. Both were the first missions ever given in these churches. At both Father McKenna was the center of attraction. The third was for the Church of Our Mother of Sorrows, Philadelphia, where he found another treasured and helpful friend in the pastor, the late Right Rev. John W. Shanahan, bishop of Harrisburg.

By the end of the spring of 1887 Father McKenna's continual labors had so sapped his strength as to make a rest imperative. Accordingly, acting upon the advice of his physicians and with the permission of his superiors, he determined to spend the summer in

Europe. He sailed from New York for Liverpool, July 5, taking with him a young ecclesiastical student —now the Rev. E. J. Farmer, O.P. Out of love for the Blessed Virgin and in gratitude for the extraordinary cure he felt he had received there fourteen years before through her intercession, the pious priest lost no time in visiting Lourdes. When he had satisfied his spirit of prayer there, he journeyed on through southern France to Prouille, Toulouse, Montreal, Fanjeaux and other points in old Languedoc dear to the heart of every true Dominican because of their associations with the missionary life of the founder of the order—Saint Dominic. It is easier to imagine than to express what must have been the feelings of the humble friar, staunch Dominican that he was, when he saw for the first time those spots so sacred to his religious institute. At Toulouse he was permitted to see the relics of Saint Thomas Aquinas preserved in the cathedral of Saint Sernin, and to say mass at his altar.

Filled with holy reflections aroused by the places he had seen, Father McKenna retraced his steps through France, Belgium and England to Ireland, stopping at points of interest along the way either to rest, to widen his knowledge, or to gratify his devotion. On his arrival in Ireland he hastened to visit once more Fallalea, the place of his birth, and to see those of his kin who still lived there. As the great friar was not only a saintly priest, but a real man as well, his love for his relatives was extraordinary. While no one could more courageously have observed the command of Christ to leave all things for His sake than Father McKenna, he still retained a warm affection for those connected with him, whether by bonds of blood or friendship.

In Ireland, wherever he went, he was asked to preach; and everywhere he electrified the people with his eloquence.

When Father McKenna left New York, he intended to remain abroad only two months. But in the meantime circumstances arose that considerably prolonged his stay in Europe.

A few years before the time of which we now write, the Rev. Patrick V. Flood of the Irish province of Dominicans, had visited the United States to raise funds to build a memorial church to Father Tom Burke at Tallaght, Ireland. As Father McKenna's deep regard for the celebrated orator enlisted his active interest in this cause, a friendship soon arose between him and Father Flood. When, therefore, the latter was appointed coadjutor bishop of Port of Spain, Trinidad, July 7, 1887, he wrote to invite his American brother to his episcopal consecration by the Most Rev. William J. Walsh, in Dublin, on the fourteenth of the following month. To attend the interesting ceremony was an easy matter, since the noted missioner was already in Europe. But the new bishop now urged Father McKenna to accompany him to Rome. Leave for this additional journey was granted readily, both because it was felt that the zealous priest's labors entitled him to the favor, and because his still weakened state of health made it unwise for him to resume his missionary duties at the opening of the fall season.

The permission to accompany Doctor Flood to Rome brought great joy to Father McKenna's heart. As with every devout Catholic, there was no place he desired more to visit than the Capital of Christendom.

His delight was the keener because the opportunity had come unsought. Through reading and study he knew the history of Rome, its churches, its spiritual treasures, its shrines, its traditions. But he longed to see the city, its objects of Catholic and historical interest, to receive the personal blessing of the Holy Father, to satisfy his devotion in prayer at its sacred places—particularly at the tombs of the apostles.

To his sorrow Father McKenna was detained in Ireland, owing to the affairs of Bishop Flood, at a time when every moment was precious. Because of the imperfect condition of the diary of his pilgrimage it is not possible to determine the exact date when he began his journey to the Eternal City or to learn all the places he visited on the way. It would seem, however, that he did not leave Ireland until some time during the month of September. The first extant note in the diary speaks of the quaint old city of Antwerp, with whose stately Gothic cathedral (Saint Mary's, dating back to the fourteenth century) and its masterpieces of painting and sculpture he was enraptured. The fine Dominican church and convent of Saint Paul in the same place, with their treasures of art and magnificent way of the cross—all sequestered by the French revolutionists—filled him with conflicting sentiments of joy and sorrow.

The next entry of the diary records a visit to Cologne, whose great Gothic cathedral he greatly admired. There also he was privileged to say mass in the church of Saint Andrew over the body of Albert the Great who shed so much glory on the Order of Saint Dominic in the middle ages. From Cologne he journeyed on to Strasburg, Lucerne and into northern Italy, via Chiasso and the Saint Gothard Tunnel.

In Italy the traveller's first point of stoppage was Milan, another place he had long wished to see, for there Charles Borromeo, his model and patron, had lived, labored and died. There reposed the saint's remains in the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin, which has been fittingly described as a beautiful poem in stone and glass. On the following morning Father McKenna had the unspeakable happiness of saying mass on the altar of the great archbishop. Doubtless the holy man was more keenly interested in his devotions to his patron saint than in the gorgeous house of prayer. The next day he had the further privilege of offering up the holy sacrifice in the church of San Eustorgio at the altar of Saint Peter Martyr, O.P., whose staunch virtues and heroic defense of the Catholic faith appealed strongly to the missionary.

But the traveller's time was limited, his health had greatly improved, and the call of the missions in America was too strong to resist. Thus, feeling that he ought not linger longer, after two days spent in Milan he went on to Venice. There the two sacred edifices that specially appealed to him were the famous cathedral of Saint Mark and the great Dominican church and convent of Saints John and Paul. His heart was rent at the sight of the sad state into which the latter had fallen after it was wrested from the Order during the French Revolution; he was especially touched by the ruined condition of its once beautiful Rosary Chapel, supposed to have been caused by a godless mob.

From the dream-city by the Adriatic Father McKenna made his way to Bologna, where also he was obliged to limit his stay to two days. He had, however, the unspeakable happiness of celebrating mass at

the exquisite tomb of Saint Dominic in the church of the same name, and the consolation of venerating the relics of Saint Catherine of Bologna in the chapel of the Poor Clares. In the quaint old university town he would fain have tarried much longer, had his time permitted; for Bologna, by reason of its associations with Saint Dominic and his Order, has strong claims on the affections of every Friar Preacher. Here, again, the missionary's joy was clouded with sadness. The marks of the French Protectorate were still plainly visible on Saint Dominic's Church and Convent. At Loreto, on the way to Rome, he could stop only long enough to say mass in the holy house of the Blessed Virgin.

Although the pious pilgrim was keenly interested in all points with important historical associations, his deeply religious character led him by preference to churches, shrines and places of devotion. The magnificent ruins of pagan monuments that lay along his route made him realize, perhaps as he had never realized before, the ephemeral nature of all things of the world, and caused him to set his soul more than ever on those of heaven.

It was on the evening of September 30, 1887, that Father McKenna reached the Eternal City. Rome, more than any other city in the world, bears witness both to the past splendors of paganism and to the triumph of Christianity. Her position in Christendom is unique. In her monuments the history of the Church can be traced from the earliest times—from the humble beginnings in the catacombs to the majestic glory of Saint Peter's, from the days of Cephas to the last vicegerent of Christ on earth. At every

turn one comes upon places hallowed by miracles, the blood of martyrs, the lives of saints, or memories of wise and holy pontiffs. Such is the city that Father McKenna had long desired to see. Now, at last, he was there. Though it was a subject on which he ever loved to converse, like every pious Catholic, he used to say that he could not express his feelings when he set foot on such consecrated soil for the first time. The problem of seeing so much and visiting so many places dear to his heart in the brief period at his disposal perplexed him. Fortunately, he had determined beforehand what he specially wished to see, and had the good Dominican Fathers of San Clemente to guide him in his pilgrimages.

The pious missioner began his round of pilgrimages on the morning of October 1, after mass in the basilica of Saint Clement built over the house of that pontiff. But to follow Father McKenna in his daily rambles through the Eternal City and its environs were too tedious. Suffice it to say that the notes in his diary, brief and imperfect as they are, show that he made the best use of the nearly three weeks he spent in Rome on this first visit, and reveal the religious trend of his mind. Few were the places of devotion omitted. With these visits, however, were interspersed others to the most noted of the pagan monuments belonging to the ancient city. The great basilicas, the oldest churches, the catacombs and points more intimately connected with his own Order had first claim on his attention. More than once he mentions going to Saint Dominic's two homes in Rome—Saint Sixtus and Santa Sabina—and the Minerva. Yet he did not neglect the places associated with the modern saints for

whom he had a particular predilection. Among the places where he notes having said mass, are Saint Paul's Outside the Walls, the crypt of Saint Peter's, the Mamertine Prison where the prince of the apostles is said to have been imprisoned, the room of Saint Pius V at Santa Sabina's, the altar of Saint Catherine of Sienna in the Minerva and that of Saint Philip Neri in the church of the Oratorians. Saint Philip's humble simplicity always appealed to the American friar. It is noteworthy, indeed, that Father McKenna's deepest devotion for the saints was shown to those whose lives were marked by apostolic zeal.

The holy man's heart was deeply impressed as he wandered through the dark winding passages of the catacombs, which in the early days were at once the cemetery for the martyrs and others of the faith and the refuge of the Christians from their pagan persecutors—a veritable subterranean city of saints, both dead and living. There his attention was arrested at every step by some object that aroused his devotion, or showed him how in these dim underground abodes were formed the Christian people of Rome in the ages rich above all others in virtue and good works; or revealed to him the heroic lives, the sacrifices and the unparalleled charity of the first generations of the faithful. He felt that, were it not for the missions back in the United States, like Saint Philip Neri, he would fain spend years in the study and contemplation of the catacombs further to train his soul in the love of things eternal.

Father McKenna's reputation as a saintly religious, a noted orator and a zealous missionary had preceded him to Rome. This, together with his striking appear-

ance and priestly deportment, caused him to be received with great deference. The superiors of his Order showed him every kindness, while Leo XIII was so impressed with him that he granted him two private audiences and sent him a special papal blessing. Indeed, so it is said, the great Pope declared his intention of making him a bishop, and it was only through the humble friar's earnest entreaties that he escaped the dreaded dignity.

When the time for Father's departure came, feelings of sorrow and gladness struggled for the mastery. On the one hand, he had to leave the Capital of Christendom hallowed by many memories; on the other, duty urged him to the work of God in the New World. He rejoiced that he had been given the privilege of seeing the city's great cathedrals and churches and many monuments of the ages of faith, all of which made him proud of his religion and whetted his thirst to return to his harvest of souls.

It was on October 19 that Father McKenna began his homeward journey, but he deflected from his route to make short pilgrimages to the home of Saint Catherine in Sienna, to Florence, and to Prato to see the body of Saint Catherine of Ricci. Sailing from Liverpool, October 27, he reached New York on the morning of November 9, after an unusually stormy voyage on which he suffered greatly. Following his custom of letting no day pass without saying mass, Father McKenna hastened to the convent of the Dominican Sisters, East Sixty-third Street, for this sacred function. The good sisters and the orphans under their charge sang a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for the return of their friend. But theirs were not the only hearts that rejoiced at the home-coming of the holy priest.

CHAPTER XVII.

RETURNS TO THE MISSIONS: PRIOR IN OHIO.

(1887–1891)

THOUGH easy and deliberate, even apparently slow in his motions, Father McKenna really worked with rapidity. His calm exterior and dignified manner served as a cloak to the intensely active spirit that glowed within. Time seemed never to bear heavily upon his shoulders, except during the rare moments when he was not actually engaged either in helping souls or in his own spiritual or intellectual advancement. Like Father Mazzuchelli, whom he had learned to love and to admire when at Sinsinawa, he could not think of repose while there was good to be accomplished. He would probably have accused himself of delinquency to duty for the four months spent abroad, had they not been devoted to the restoration of his health and to satisfying his devotion.

Thus no sooner had the zealous friar returned to America than we find him proceeding to Louisville, Kentucky, to give a mission in Saint Louis Bertrand's Church. From there he went to give an eight days' retreat in the cathedral of Cincinnati. Father McKenna had long admired Archbishop Elder of that city, but this was his first opportunity to study the saintly prelate at close range. Of a kindred spirit the two holy men parted holding each other in affectionate esteem.

These two were the beginning of a long series of

missions lasting, with but a few brief periods of rest, for more than a year. Wherever the man of God went, his zeal and piety and the wonderful effects of his preaching were recognized. Often his coming was heralded in terms that must have shocked his humility. A notable instance in this connection was the sermon he preached at the cathedral of New York, Christmas, 1887. The plan of this sermon as outlined in the *Freeman's Journal,* December 31, 1887, gives a fair idea of his method. First there was the prelude, in which the speaker sought to attract the attention and to win the good will of his audience. This was followed by the dogmatic portion of the discourse; for it was Father McKenna's aim, first of all, to instruct the people in the teachings of the Church as a basis for their religious belief and practice. Keenly realizing that without dogma morality can have neither life nor a secure foundation, he endeavored to make Catholic doctrine clear and interesting by striking illustrations, or to drive it home by strong, direct language. Then came the moral part of the oration, wherein he used all his extraordinary powers of persuasion to induce his hearers to lead virtuous lives. Often he ended with a brilliant peroration that left a lasting impression.

We will not, of course, attempt to enumerate all the missions of 1888. But those at Our Lady of the Rosary, South Boston; Saint James', Salem; Saint Mary's, Troy, and Saint Stephen's and Saint Raphael's, New York City, merit mention as among the most noteworthy in point of numbers and enthusiasm that he conducted in the first half of the year. The last two deserve a special word. During the mission at Saint

Stephen's—given for men only, and considered one of the most successful in the history of the parish—the Holy Name Society was established with a large charter membership. It was at this time, it would seem, that an intimate friendship arose between Father McKenna and the pastor, Rev. Charles H. Colton, the late bishop of Buffalo.

Although a mission had been given there the previous year, that conducted by Father McKenna at Saint Raphael's, April 1–29, 1888, was remarkably fruitful in its results. People came from far and near in such numbers as to tax the capacity of the church. The confessions and communions ran into the thousands. From the start the sermons attracted many non-Catholics, nearly a hundred of whom became converts. Many also who had long neglected their religion, were brought back to the practice of their faith. For want of time on the part of the missionaries, the parochial clergy took charge of the large class of those who needed instruction, and as the mission continued for four weeks, most of them were prepared for communion and confirmation before its close. The spiritual exercises for the children of the parish were entrusted to Father McKenna, and as his heart ever went out to the young in a special manner, one may imagine how he strove to enkindle the divine love in their tender souls during the time allotted them.

In the May of the same year (1888), he gave a retreat at the provincial seminary of Saint Joseph's, Troy, to a large class preparing for ordination—a retreat that still lives in the memory of those who made it. The season closed with a number of small missions given, at the request of Bishop McMahon, to

poor country parishes of Connecticut, which work kept him occupied until the end of June.

The summer months, however, brought the zealous missionary little rest. Hardly, indeed, had he finished his work in Connecticut when, at the solicitation of Bishops Gallagher, Machebeuf and Matz, he started for the south and west to conduct a series of clerical retreats. The first of these were given in Galveston, Texas, for the priests of the diocese. From Galveston he journeyed on to Denver. Perhaps Father McKenna never gave greater satisfaction in preaching to those of his own calling than in these places. These retreats (there were four) were followed in quick succession by others given to different sisterhoods in various parts of the country, keeping him almost constantly occupied until the return of the missionary season in September.

"A good beginning" it was Father McKenna's wont to say, "is half the victory, and the end crowns the work." Acting on this principle, he attached an especial importance to the opening and closing sermons of a mission. The aim of the former is to prepare the people for the spiritual work that lies before them; that of the latter to make them realize the necessity of perseverance in the path of rectitude. It was Father McKenna's custom, as long as he remained at the head of the missionary band, to preach at least one of these important discourses on all the missions in which he took part. And it was seldom that his reputation did not bring such throngs to the opening and closing exercises as taxed the capacity of the largest churches. Frequently, unless another place or time could be arranged for the overflow, many had to be turned away.

Such, for instance, was the case at the mission in the Church of the Gate of Heaven, South Boston, which was one of his first in the fall of 1888. Immediately succeeding this came the mission in Saint Mary's, Newburg. It was intended to last only one week, but proved so satisfactory that the pastor had it prolonged for another seven days.

It was about this time that Father McKenna's great work in Philadelphia began in earnest. Commencing with a mission for Rev. Daniel A. Brennan at the Church of the Assumption which was considered one of the most remarkable ever given in a city where such religious exercises had become common, Philadelphia begins to take in his life the place formerly held by Brooklyn. For nearly twenty years the zealous friar had given missions season after season in Brooklyn and drawn such audiences that he had become a familiar figure to a large part of the city's Catholic population. As he still remained popular, continuing to preach and lecture there frequently, it would seem that the change was largely due to the greater earnestness with which the clergy of Philadelphia sought his services. Doubtless, however, the law of change, or the desire for the new and untried that is so strong in us all, had its part in this partial transfer of the noted missionary's field of labor.

Two other exceptional missions given under his immediate direction in the latter half of 1888 were in the Church of the Assumption, Brookline, Massachusetts, and in Saint Vincent Ferrer's, New York. The former illustrates how Father McKenna's preaching not only reached, but carried away, people of every walk of life; for the elite of the fashionable

suburb of Boston were brought no less under the spell of his eloquence than the laboring classes of the many cities and towns visited by him. With the parishioners of Saint Vincent Ferrer's he was such a favorite that they always turned out *en masse* to hear him, and few were the missions given there during the many years he was engaged in this work in which he did not take a prominent part. The congregation never tired listening to him.

Prior to the close of 1888, Father McKenna had engaged a series of missions for his zealous band of co-laborers lasting until the end of June in the following year, and extending from Boston to Chicago, and from Chicago to Memphis, Tennessee. But he himself remained principally in the east, where his work for 1889 began on January 6 at the church of Saint Benedict the Moor for the colored Catholics of New York, in whom he had taken so affectionate an interest in his early priestly life. From Saint Benedict's he proceeded to the Church of the Assumption, in Philadelphia. Of his labors here we read:

"The mission was a great success. Thousands approached the sacraments, some of whom were not at church for years. The good that has been done by these holy missionaries God alone knows. All the members of the congregation were pleased and edified with the sermons and instructions delivered during the Missions, especially those delivered by the great orator, Father McKenna."[1]

Thus the apostle of piety continued almost without respite his labors for souls until the month of June. Other parishes in Philadelphia, Boston, Hartford, New Haven, Brooklyn, Troy and elsewhere gave him hearty

1 *The Catholic Standard*, January 26, 1889.

welcome. Everywhere the people came from far and near both to hear the words of salvation as they fell from his eloquent lips and to profit by his spiritual ministrations. But the strain had begun again to tell on the good friar's strength. Largely to give him an opportunity to recover his impaired health, he was placed at this time in the honorable and responsible, but less trying, post of duty of which we have now to tell.

Traditions, concrete living ideals, example—all these are of prime importance for the higher welfare of both Church and State. In a religious institute they are an essential principle of unity and strength, adhesion and vitality, second only to its rules and constitutions. Without their energizing influence it were difficult, if not impossible, for an order long to retain its spirit or even to continue its struggle for existence. They are as spiritual food and drink to the young in training for the vocation and labors of a religious order.

These truths were early and keenly realized by Father McKenna. A true Friar Preacher from the day he received the habit of the Order, he set himself to learn its traditions, and he lived up to them through all his long religious life. His spirit and labors were the embodiment of the ideals of Saint Dominic, the founder of his institute; his life was the expression of one of his Order's prime purposes and places in the Church—to aid and subserve the hierarchy. In all things the zealous friar was a model priest and religious, thirsting for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It was, therefore, no matter for surprise that, when the place of superior at Saint Joseph's Priory, near Somerset, Ohio, became vacant in the

spring of 1889, the fathers of that institution unanimously chose the saintly man for their spiritual head. At that time Saint Joseph's was the house of studies for the clerical students, and was accordingly one of the largest and most important convents in the province.[2] It was felt that Father McKenna's high standing in the Church of America, his long fruitful labors, his zeal, his example and his counsel would not only give added dignity to the position to which he was chosen, but would be a source of inspiration to the young clerics there pursuing their philosophical and theological studies.

Another influence that had its part in the choice of Father McKenna for this responsible post, was the desire at once to reward his merits and to give him a well-earned rest from his arduous apostolate and thus prolong his life for the good of the province. He was then in his fifty-sixth year, but his labors had so told upon him that, although still quite active, he appeared to be much older.

It was about the middle of May, 1889, when Father McKenna was elected prior for the second time. As in the first instance, he was busily occupied at his work of saving souls in Brooklyn when the official notification of his election reached him. Again his first thought was how to avoid the dreaded honor. But when he read the provincial's letter commanding his acceptance, the spirit of obedience—not less strong in him than that of humility—caused him once more to bow to the voice of authority, which he always regarded as the expression of the divine will.

[2] The clerical studies were transferred to the Priory of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D. C., in August, 1905. Since that date Saint Joseph's has been used as the province's simple novitiate.

With characteristic promptness the new prior started for the west immediately after the close of the mission on which he was engaged. The impressive event of his arrival at Saint Joseph's on Thursday, June 8, stands out prominently in the writer's memory. A delegation, composed of his brethren from the convent and people of the parish, met the distinguished clergyman at the village railway station and escorted him to his new home a little more than two miles away. At the priory diligent watch was kept for his approach; and when the cortège came in sight, following the time-honored custom of the Order, the bells of the church and convent were rung, while the community gathered at the entrance to bid their new superior a hearty welcome. We can never forget that welcome. It was one that must have gladdened Father McKenna's tender heart and soothed the sorrow he felt at leaving his loved work in the east.

Other influences that helped to make the good man resigned to this change, were his friendship for Bishop Watterson and his intense interest in the young men of the province preparing for the priesthood. It was at Saint Joseph's, also, that he had seen realized his long cherished hope of becoming a Friar Preacher. There he had passed his year of probation, had made his religious profession, had gone through the greater part of his clerical studies, had become imbued with the spirit of the apostolic Fenwick. For these reasons, perhaps no spot on earth had so strong a claim on the friar's affections as this cradle of Catholicity in Ohio.

Father McKenna's election was not less gratifying to Bishop Watterson than to the community of Saint Joseph's. Indeed, hardly had the new prior arrived

in the diocese of Columbus when that dignified, scholarly prelate appointed him one of the diocesan consultors. The good bishop appeared to think that the presence of so holy a priest must call down blessings upon the diocese; and no doubt he was not mistaken, for God's favors are bestowed upon those who serve Him with the fidelity that characterized the friar's entire life.

In the life of every great and good man there is much that appeals to us all, but in that of this humble Dominican there was a charm which appeared to belong to him alone. His character had as many sides as a cut diamond, and every side seemed to shine with its own special lustre. While we had often seen Father McKenna and heard him preach previous to the time he became superior at Saint Joseph's, it was at this period that the writer's acquaintance with him became intimate. It was then that we had our first opportunity to study him leisurely and at first-hand—an occasion for which we shall ever be deeply grateful.

Although, as a result of his hard labors, Father McKenna's health was much impaired at the commencement of his priorship, he never suffered this to prevent him from being at his post of duty or taking part in the community exercises. In all things he was a shining model. A true exemplar of the priesthood and of the religious life, he led the way for the others to follow. To lead, indeed, was his ruling principle; for he believed, as he taught, that if the superior sets the example the subjects will not be slow to imitate. Another principle that he both strongly inculcated and faithfully acted upon, was that the wisest rule is the kindliest rule. He was a father to all, and all revered

him as a father. His good judgment, supported by his experience in the world and in the ministry, told him that the moderation of the *via media* is golden even in matters spiritual. This, too, was an axiom he sought to impress upon the minds of those under his charge. Withal, the sight of the saintly superior at his prayers, his regularity at the conventual devotions and exercises, his scrupulous observance of the Order's constitutions, his religious demeanor, his piety and humility, his spirit of practical asceticism, were an inspiration to us all.

The Order of Friars Preacher may be said to mark the period of breaking away from the old traditions that bound religious bodies so strictly to their conventual precincts. Saint Dominic, as has been seen, had learned from personal experience with the world of sin the need of trained warriors who should be not only free, but bound by their vocation, to go forth to combat error and to aid bishops in the spread of light and in the defense of the Church. This was the novel idea, the prime purpose, of the institute he brought into existence. He retained, it is true, much of the legislation and many of the practices that prevailed in the orders prior to his day; but these were not to be impediments to the new, the active and the energetic elements that stand out so prominently in the laws by which his brethren were to be governed. In this, indeed, we find the explanation of the broad, flexible character of the Dominican constitutions and the wide, discretionary powers invested in the superiors spoken of in the course of these pages. Father McKenna thoroughly understood this. Thus, while he was unbending with regard to all fundamentals and the spirit

of the rule, he was notably large in his interpretation of the letter of the law and in the exercise of his authority where the good of souls was even remotely concerned.

As might be expected of a man of Father McKenna's zealous character, one of his principal aims during his term of office was to have the young men under his charge trained to be not merely good religious and model priests, but efficient missionaries and harvesters of souls like himself. To this end he frequently gave the community pious instructions or eloquent discourses on the sacredness of their calling, the lives they should lead, the high ideals they should hold up for themselves, the charity that should fill their hearts, the ardent desire they should foster for the salvation of their fellow-men. On these occasions his little clerical audience hung in breathless silence on his burning words. His message was always of the highest and noblest; the way in which he presented it never failed to command the strictest attention. Often, indeed, one might have been tempted to fancy that so must have spoken the prophets of old when God sent them to guide His chosen people.

It was also Father McKenna's custom at this time frequently to preach in the little country church attached to Saint Joseph's. People flocked from every direction to hear his inspiring sermons which were no less a source of spiritual joy and intellectual delight for the members of the community. Days were these of golden opportunity for the students of the province to enjoy and to study the art that has swayed men's souls from the beginning of the world.

Father McKenna loved nature and was fond of the

open air. Always keenly interested in vocations to the priesthood, he showed the most fatherly concern for those under his spiritual care at Saint Joseph's. On days of recreation it was his delight to go with them on their walks through the surrounding country, every spot of which he knew well from his own student days. It was on these strolls that the writer learned from the venerable missionary much of his own life, as well as much of the history of the province, its traditions, its trials in bygone times, its early fathers.

During the two summer vacations he spent at the province's quondam house of studies, the great preacher took the novices almost daily to a grove that stood on the sloping hill in the sheepfold, about half a mile from the monastery. There, under the generous shade of spreading maples, he would declaim for them, and have them recite in turn extracts from productions of noted orators. Nothing was left undone to improve them in an art that belongs in an especial manner to the vocation of a Friar Preacher. Through these lessons in the open air, coupled with others in the convent, the holy man laid or advanced the foundations of a sacred oratory that has been the means of accomplishing untold good on our Catholic parochial missions.

During these strolls through the country and at these outdoor lessons in oratory, the writer learned also to admire Father McKenna's wide reading and his mastery of the Latin tongue. We marvelled how one who had led so busy and active a life could have found time to read so much or could have retained so perfect a knowledge of classical literature. While because of

the lack of practice he did not speak Latin readily, he read it with the greatest ease—could quote the Scriptures or the classics with astonishing fluency. On these occasions, too, he showed his wide acquaintance with history (particularly that of the Church) and hagiography. In the latter science he was an authority, and it was a treat to hear him converse on the subject. He was also well versed in theology and was one of the most practical moral theologians the writer has known. As the good friar was seldom seen without a book in his hand, one may believe that these accomplishments were largely the result of his tireless industry. In fact, industry, piety and zeal were the things he most strongly urged upon aspirants to the priesthood.

As has been said, there was nothing morose, cold or repellant in Father McKenna's piety. He was deeply pious, but he was also sociable, genial, jovial. In his recreation with the novices he was as merry as they; he talked and joked as though he were one of them—always, however, with becoming decorum. Even in his most serious sermons he often enlivened his point with an apt story that served not merely to prevent tedium, but to give life and color to his discourse, to illustrate his meaning, or to strike the imagination. In this, indeed, he excelled.

The holy friar believed that "cleanliness is next to godliness." Slovenliness he could not tolerate. He could see no connection between sanctity and dirt. While his heart went out to poverty, it shrank from the filthiness with which it is frequently associated. That one should keep the body, which is the house of the soul and the temple of the Holy Ghost, almost as clean

as the soul itself was a principle that he not only carefully practiced but consistently urged upon others. From a merely human point of view, one of the most attractive things about Father McKenna was his immaculate neatness, a trait that characterized him to a marked degree even in the helplessness of his old age.

It was this love of neatness, together with zeal for the house of God, that led him to do so much for the church and convent in Louisville during his term as superior there. Prompted by the same spirit he now performed the same good offices, in so far as the slender means at his disposal permitted, for Saint Joseph's. One of the first things to claim his attention when he arrived in Ohio was the need of more suitable side altars for the church. When, therefore, he learned that the two wooden Gothic altars that he had placed in Saint Louis Bertrand's, Louisville, were to be replaced by others of marble, he asked that they be sent to him, promising to give a mission as compensation. The writer remembers well the joy shown by the good prior when these two graceful altars were set in position in the little house of prayer, where they still remain and are spoken of as "Father McKenna's altars."

But as at Saint Louis Bertrand's, so at Saint Joseph's Father McKenna's cares were not confined to his community. He still retained the position of head of the eastern band of missionaries, and from Ohio directed their labors. In addition to this, although he had intended to do but little of this kind of work during his priorship at the house of studies, the pastors of some of the churches of the Columbus diocese that had not been blessed with a mission in years, importuned the good man until he consented to give their flocks the spiritual exercises for which they were hungering.

Occasionally, too, during the first year of this sojourn in Ohio he was prevailed upon to journey back to Philadelphia, where his services were much sought. He also went to Troy, New York, and once to New Haven, Connecticut. In the same period he gave a mission in Louisville, one in the cathedral of Denver and another in the Dominican church of the Holy Rosary, Minneapolis. Urgent reasons for undertaking these distant labors were the heavy debt of the convent and the need of repairs. In spite of these varied duties, not since his first entry on the missions, three years after his ordination, had Father McKenna enjoyed so much freedom and quiet repose as from June, 1889, to the fall of 1890. This was what he most needed, and the country air, together with relaxation from the strain of anxiety, soon restored his health. As soon as this became known, appeals for his personal aid on the missions began to pour in upon him not only from his brethren engaged in that work, but from pastors seeking the services of the fathers. The pressure of these solicitations and his own burning zeal for souls became irresistible, and from the fall of 1890 until the resignation of his office in the June of the following year the zealous friar was often away from his convent. It was because of the impossibility of satisfactorily combining the life of an active missionary with the priorship at the house of studies that he again asked to be permitted to lay down the reins of authority.

Yet, notwithstanding his frequent absences, Father McKenna's term of office at Saint Joseph's was a notable success. Its influence continues to be felt at that venerable institution after a lapse of more than a quarter of a century.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEVOTION TO HIS PATRON SAINTS.

It is now fitting that we should speak of an influence that did much to shape the course and to form the character of the subject of this sketch. It was an influence which plays only too little part in the lives of Catholics. In the life of Father McKenna, however, it was not merely of such importance as to merit mention; nay, a biography of the distinguished Friar Preacher that did not make this characteristic clearly known to the reader would necessarily be incomplete.

He was named after two illustrious saints of the Church—Charles Borromeo and Hyacinth Odrowacz. Both were of noble lineage, but they became still more distinguished through their learning, their sanctity and their great labors in the cause of souls and religion.

Charles Borromeo was born, October 2, 1538, in the Castle of Arona, a town on the southern shore of Lago Maggiore in northern Italy. Through both his parents, Count Gioberto Borromeo and Margherita de Medici, he was of the best Italian blood. He was educated at Arona, Milan, and at the University of Pavia. At the early age of twenty-one years he was created cardinal and made papal secretary of state by his uncle, Pius IV. But in spite of his youth, the future saint did not suffer these proud distinctions to rob him of his deep humility or to cause him to relax his spirit of prayer and mortification. In 1563 he was consecrated bishop, and in the following year was appointed

metropolitan of Milan. In all these responsible positions he showed extraordinary executive ability. His success in temporal affairs, however, was outshone by his striking virtues and heroic charity. Through his zeal, guided by a wonderful tact and patience, Saint Charles Borromeo was enabled to accomplish much both for the Council of Trent (in its closing sessions) and towards the promulgation of its decrees.

As Milan had been without a resident archbishop for eighty years, Charles sought permission to live in his episcopal city that he might more easily correct the abuses that had crept in during this period and superintend the introduction of the decrees of the Council of Trent into his diocese. But Pius IV would not permit him to leave Rome. Under this pontiff's successor, however, the pious prelate's wish was granted, and he proceeded to set right matters that had gone wrong, as well as to put into execution the disciplinary measures enacted at Trent. Under his wise guidance, the inspiration of his zeal and his example—for in all things he led the way he asked others to follow—the work of reformation proceeded apace. In a surprisingly short time Milan had become a model diocese. Notwithstanding his busy life, Charles found time to write many pastoral letters, pious instructions and other works, all of which are still considered classic in their order. The great archbishop—an ideal pastor—died, November 3, 1584. From the time of his death he was honored as a saint in his metropolitan city. The devotion paid him there rapidly became universal, leading to his canonization in November, 1610. Such, in briefest outline, was the life of the saint after whom Father McKenna received the name of Charles in baptism.

Hyacinth belonged to an earlier age. Born, A.D., 1185, he died at Cracow, August 15, 1257. His birthplace was the Castle of Lanka, at Kamin, in Silesia, Poland—now Prussia. Like Charles Borromeo, he was of noble lineage; for his father Eustachius Odrowacz, Count of Konski, belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Silesia. Hyacinth and his younger brother, Blessed Ceslas, received their early education from their uncle, Rev. Ivo Odrowacz, of the house of Konski and chancellor of Poland.

Resolving later to embrace the ecclesiastical state, the two young men were sent to study successively at the universities of Cracow, Prague and Bologna. At the latter place they received the degrees of doctor of law and divinity. From Bologna they returned to their native country, where they were accorded prebends and became members of the episcopal council. In addition to this, Hyacinth was appointed a canon in the cathedral of Cracow, while Ceslas was made provost of the church of Sandomir.

The mantle of sainthood appears to have fallen upon both at an early age. Thus, like Charles Borromeo, Hyacinth and Ceslas did not suffer birth, honors or education to stand in the way of a holy life; for in those good old Catholic days the highest learning and station went hand in hand with religion.

In 1218 or 1219 the two young ecclesiastics accompanied their pious uncle, Ivo Odrowacz, who in the meantime had become bishop of Cracow, to the Eternal City. At that period all Rome was aglow over the preaching, the zeal, the life and the miracles of Saint Dominic, the founder of the new Order that was to bear his name. There the visitors saw the saint raise

the youthful Napoleon Orsini to life. The bishop and his retinue soon made the acquaintance of the chivalrous thaumaturge of Caleruega, with the result that both the nephews were so irresistibly drawn to him that they begged to be admitted into his Order. Later, in 1220, they received the habit of the Friar Preacher from the hands of Saint Dominic himself in the historic old Dominican convent of Santa Sabina. Their time of probation over, they took their religious vows and were sent back to their native country to spread the Order in the north.

It was then that Hyacinth entered upon a glorious apostolate that continued until his death. His labors extended through his native Poland, Russia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the northern countries of Asia—perhaps as far as the Great Wall of China. In him, indeed, was realized Saint Dominic's dream of a mission to the Cumans—a name which seems to have been used at that period to designate the unsettled, roving Tartar hordes that inhabited the present eastern Hungary, Bulgaria, Roumania and southern Russia nearer the Black Sea. Through Hyacinth and the disciples he gathered about him, the labors of the Order of Preachers were carried into more than half of the then known world. Everywhere he preached, spread the faith, founded churches and convents, converted heathens and sinners, worked miracles, thus winning for himself the titles of "Apostle of the North" and the "wonder-worker" of his age. Hyacinth's labors have few parallels in ecclesiastical history. He was raised to the honor of the altar by Clement VIII in 1594. Such, also in brief outline, was the man whom Father McKenna chose as his patron when he received the Dominican habit.

The purpose of the Church in giving the names of saints to her members in baptism is that they may have a model after which to pattern and fashion their Christian lives and a patron to intercede for them in heaven. The same idea underlies the custom which obtains in most religious institutes of giving their subjects, when they are invested with the order's habit, a name different from that borne by them in the world. This second saint is to be their supernal benefactor and the pattern whose example they are to emulate in striving for perfection.

Father McKenna keenly appreciated this idea of the Church and his Order. To put it into execution in his own life he regarded as a sacred duty. Those who knew him intimately will bear us out in the statement that he ever sought to fulfill this holy obligation. As a boy in Ireland, under the solicitous care of his Christian mother, he learned the life of Charles Borromeo. His choice of Saint Hyacinth as his exemplar in religion was not haphazard, for he knew well the fruitful missionary labors of the Apostle of the North and felt strongly impelled to such a life himself. And having chosen the name of Hyacinth, he set to work to learn more of the man who many centuries before had made it synonymous with sanctity. Through all his long priestly career the missioner never tired of studying the lives and the virtues of the great archbishop of Milan and the wonder-worker of his Order, or of trying to reproduce them in himself. If, as we are told, the blessed in heaven are pleased with the holy lives of their namesakes on earth, then Saint Charles Borromeo and Saint Hyacinth must have found much joy in that of the Rev. Charles Hyacinth McKenna.

Although the zealous priest sedulously cultivated the habit of reading the lives of the servants of God in general, there were two others, besides those mentioned above, towards whom he was drawn by a particular devotion. These were Saint Dominic Guzman and Saint Catherine of Sienna—the one the founder of his Order, the other one of its fairest flowers. Like Charles Borromeo and Hyacinth Odrowacz, Dominic and Catherine, in addition to cultivating the habit of intense meditation and giving much care to their own personal sanctification, were most zealous and active in the cause of souls. These four were the good Friar Preacher's models in a special sense. His spirit was closely akin to theirs.

The efforts put forth by these servants of God for the salvation of souls were a source of constant inspiration to Father McKenna in his labors for the same blessed cause. The thought of them sustained and encouraged him in more than one trying experience, when his work appeared to bear little fruit, when his spirits ran low, or when he suffered from ill health. This was particularly the case during the last decade of his life when, in spite of his age, he traversed the country in every direction to further the apostolates of the Rosary and Holy Name societies.

It was largely Father McKenna's efforts to mould and shape his life after these patterns of holiness that made him the man of God so fittingly portrayed in the following letter of Cardinal Farley:

"New York,
"June 21, 1916.

"*Rev. and dear Father:*

"It affords me great pleasure to give you an appreciation of

Father McKenna, one of the most apostolic men with whom I have been privileged to come into close contact. I had the happiness of meeting Father McKenna in the first year of my priesthood, when he came with other Dominican Fathers to give a mission in St. Peter's Church, New Brighton, Staten Island, where I was an assistant. His stay at the rectory gave me ample opportunity of knowing his beautiful character. Christian simplicity and sweetness seemed to me to be his dominant traits, and this first impression has survived and been confirmed by our relations during the intervening years. Our first acquaintance ripened into a sacred friendship. I can still recall what a favorite he was with the people of St. Peter's during the mission, and my official position during the years he was attached to St. Vincent Ferrer's made it possible for me to observe how he was loved by that large congregation for his zeal and unselfish devotion to his priestly duties.

"But the great object of his life was to spread devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. When he had exhausted his physical powers, and had no longer the strength to attend to his regular missionary labors, this apostolate of increasing veneration for the Holy Name filled in his life most fruitfully, and I cannot withold the expression of my conviction that the results of his work in this field will form his crown of great glory, when it shall please the 'Divine Master'—as he was wont to call our Blessed Lord—to say 'Friend, come up higher,' a day which, I trust, may be still far distant.

"I always think of Father McKenna as bearing a strong resemblance to St. Philip Neri. He possessed the same sweetness and simplicity of character, and this it was which won for him the confidence and love of the thousands to whom he preached. Like St. Philip Neri also, he inspired with zeal and with some measure of his own apostolic spirit the young priests, who had the happiness of knowing him. The sons of St. Dominic have reason to be proud of their saintly and well beloved brother. Men like Father McKenna have proved to be the greatest bless-

ings our Divine Lord has vouchsafed to His Church in this country.

"Very faithfully yours in Christ,
"JOHN CARDINAL FARLEY,
"*Archbishop of New York.*"

The picture which Cardinal Farley gives of the noted missionary is true to life. But in Father McKenna the simplicity and the sweet, gentle temperament that were among his dominant traits, were not an indication of weakness or instability. His calm exterior was invariable, except when sin was to be rebuked or principle defended. Then the humble friar could rise as a tower of strength. Even then he had the rare power of retaining perfect control over his indignation, of so tempering his words with kindness that he not only demanded the respect, but won the confidence and the hearts of those whom he reproved. An extraordinary combination of Christian sweetness, humility and strength blended with his charity, zeal and holiness, devotion to duty and faithfulness in friendship to make up the charm of that splendid priestly character which all loved and admired.

CHAPTER XIX.

RESIGNS AS HEAD OF THE MISSIONS: GOES TO EUROPE.

(1891–1895)

At no time in the history of the province have the Dominicans enjoyed greater popularity as conductors of parochial missions than during the period when this apostolic work was under Father McKenna's direction. His principal difficulty seems to have been to gratify the pastors in the east on one point—the almost universal request of applicants for missions that he himself would be one of the missionaries. This was not because of any dissatisfaction with the work of the others, but because Father McKenna's years of experience, his eloquence, his magnetic personality and his many extraordinary qualifications caused him to be desired by all classes. Not infrequently, indeed, the superior's inability to give his personal services led to the loss or to the cancelling of a mission. This was particularly the case when, as often happened, the pastor was a native of Ireland, and a little national pride —a thing so natural in us all—made him desirous of exhibiting the genius of his native land.

As this peculiar attitude was far more prevalent in the east than in the south or the mid-west, and as in his capacity of superior he could arrange the personnel of the missions according to his best judgment, Father McKenna labored more through the states along or near the Atlantic seaboard, while he sent his confrères

into those parts where the Celtic sentiment was not so pronounced. Still another motive that had its part in this action was that in the east, where religious antagonism was less in evidence, the eloquent exhortative sermon, in which the great missioner pre-eminently excelled, was more popular; but in the mid-west and the south the controversial discourse, for which he had little love, was often expected.

It would be unfair to Father McKenna's memory to imagine that he chose to devote his talents principally to the east through any motive of pride or personal ease. No thought could have been farther from him than this. What was ever uppermost in his mind was the glory of God, the greater good of the Church and the spiritual welfare of the greater number of souls. The attainment of these ends constituted his life-work; they were the causes that he sought to advance by his every deed; they always determined the disposition of the missionary forces under his charge. How unhesitatingly he would himself go to any part of the country in quest of souls may be seen from the labors through which we have traced him.

At the time of Father McKenna's return to regular mission work Philadelphia was one of the principal fields of his apostolic activity. Both the clergy and the people had become enchanted with the holy priest. From early January to the middle of June, 1891, he took part in six parochial missions in that city, while much of the fall of the same year and of 1892 was also given to the service of the Church there. If one may judge from the accounts of these missions, enthusiasm over his work must have run high indeed. He had now become as conspicuous a figure in Philadelphia as

in Brooklyn or Boston. Humble as he was, the tributes of honor paid him must have at times tempted the holy religious to pride. But we may rest assured that in such temptations, if they came upon him, he sought and found safety in his usual refuge of prayer. A noteworthy feature of all these missions was the large proportion of men who attended them, and their presence in such great numbers was doubtless due to Father McKenna's efforts. As a sample of these great missions we may single out that given, May 4–17, 1891, for the vicar general of the diocese, Very Rev. Nicholas Cantwell, at Saint Philip's. The venerable rector declared that he had not seen the male portion of the parish turn out in such unusual numbers or manifest so much earnestness and devotion in the forty-seven years it had been under his care.

We have often heard the holy priest say that the last two years (1891–1892) the missions were under his guidance, were among the busiest of his life. With the documents at hand we can follow him to many cities, both large and small, through all the east, into Ohio and Kentucky, on to the cathedrals of Milwaukee and Galveston, and into other places of the mid-west and south. A mission worthy of note and belonging to this time was one given at Saint Louis Bertrand's, Louisville, where the people so idolized him that they almost fancied that a mission without him must lack something essential to its success. But wherever he went, the same story has to be told: his audiences were composed not merely of the congregations for which he labored, but of Catholics and non-Catholics from different parts of the city. Wherever he went, his heart and soul were set on his work—one of the first

requisites for success. He had a way of appealing to sinners that was irresistible and peculiarly his own. Pastors have often told the writer that they had tried by missions and in every conceivable manner to arouse the negligent or to reach the backsliders of their parishes, but failed until they secured the services of Father McKenna. His reputation always brought these classes to hear him, with the one result that his first sermon touched their hearts, won their confidence and opened the way for their conversion.

But here we must interrupt the narrative of the great missionary's apostolic labors to speak of a diary (accidentally discovered) that throws a side-light on his spiritual character. Father McKenna returned to Ohio in June, 1891, to be present at the ordination of the writer's class and to await the acceptance of his resignation of the priorship at Saint Joseph's, which he had forwarded from Philadelphia. Then he proceeded to Minneapolis and on to distant Denver, where he gave two retreats—one to the clergy of the diocese, another to the Sisters of Loretto. A diary detailing the incidents of this journey to the west and back suggests that he was probably accustomed to make notes on his travels generally. But if this be so, he must have destroyed them later. This little book that has been fortunately preserved throws much interesting light on the pious priest's character and inner thoughts, and perhaps gives an additional reason for the resignation of the priorship in Ohio. It shows how he constantly meditated on death, which he seems to have believed was not far distant for himself. Again and again he recurs to this topic—speaks time and again of the uncertainty of life at his age and of the

wisdom of being prepared for the Master's summons. Other topics on which he frequently touches are charity towards others, the power and necessity of prayer, the value of time, the good to be derived from study and pious reading. The works he notes as having read reveal not only his good judgment, but how he constantly occupied his mind either for his own profit or for that of his fellow-men.

One would fancy that so faithful an ambassador of Christ as Father McKenna could have found little to reproach his conscience with. But, like the saints whose humility seems to have caused them to lose sight of their virtues, the good priest constantly accuses himself here of all manner of imperfections. We read, for instance, that he has too little of the spirit of prayer and meditation; that he does not mortify himself or practice humility as he should; that he labors for his own glory rather than for that of God or for the good of the Church and the salvation of souls; that he unduly squanders his time; that he often sins against fraternal charity. Yet to all who were intimately acquainted with the noted missioner, it is known that in those virtues wherein he claims to have failed, he really excelled. How different the view saints have ever had of themselves from that which others have entertained of them! Doubtless, however, the latter view is the more correct and more in keeping with that of God, since He rewards them for their lives, while we honor them for their holiness.

Yet another shortcoming of which Father McKenna (implicitly at least) accuses himself in this diary, is supersensitiveness. This was a surprise to the writer —a surprise that was the greater because such a

weakness was so apparently incompatible with the missioner's remarkably calm exterior. If it be true that he suffered in this way, he held his feelings under such masterful control that they were never suspected even by his most intimate friends.

Like the diary of his visit abroad, that of his western journey shows that he so arranged his travels, that if at all possible, he might say mass morning after morning. To this end he shrank from no personal inconvenience. Only necessity or the good of souls, he felt, could excuse him from the daily exercise of so sacred a function. Still another item of the diary that cannot be omitted here is an account of a short vacation at the seaside between his return from the west and a retreat that he gave at Watertown, Massachusetts. From this time forward it was Father McKenna's custom to take such a vacation every summer. The bracing salt air was a tonic to his labor-worn body that he could find in no other relaxation—a tonic that gave him vigor for another year's hard work. He had given missions in the churches of a number of our seaside resorts and had become a friend of their pastors. Thus he stopped on these occasions either at the pastoral residence or with friends near the church, that he might not only say mass every morning, but pay his usual visits to the Blessed Sacrament during the day. Not infrequently he supplied the priest's place while he, too, sought a restful change.

Wherever he went, the zealous apostle kept up his efforts in the causes of the Rosary and Holy Name societies, although he did not always meet with the sympathetic response in regard to the latter for which he longed. The accounts of the missions conducted by

him in Philadelphia show that he had extraordinary success there in the propagation of the Rosary. But with the Holy Name Society the case seems to have been somewhat different. Catholic as the city was, the pastors seem to have been slow to realize the confraternity's power for good among the men of their flocks. This is all the more strange when contrasted with the present flourishing status of the society in the old Quaker town. Today there is perhaps no city in the land where the organization of the Holy Name, relatively speaking, is stronger in numbers, better regulated, or receives more zealous and enthusiastic support from both the clergy and the people. This change of sentiment, there can be no doubt, is largely due to Father McKenna's long and earnest advocacy of the cause and to the modification of the Church's law governing the confraternity which his repeated petitions finally procured.

As has been said more than once in the course of these pages, the fathers sought rather to prevent than to invite mention of their missionary efforts in the public prints. Father McKenna followed the same course. Yet the humble friar for more than twenty years kept for his personal use records of the apostolic labors in which he took part. But these records have disappeared. For these reasons, it is now difficult, if not impossible, to give a complete and accurate account or a chronological list of his multitudinous missions. Fortunately, however, his extraordinarily active and effective career is still well known. And this, together with the writer's numerous conversations with the saintly priest himself and the many notices of his work that, in spite of his opposition, found their way

into the papers, has enabled us to furnish the reader with what we may be allowed to believe a fairly comprehensive history of one whose life richly deserves to be recorded and saved from oblivion.

We cannot do better than to let Father McKenna tell in his own characteristic way why so few records are to be found. His letter is full of interest, confirms the accuracy of much that has been said in the course of these pages, and shows the keen interest the grand old man continued to take in affairs to the end of his days.

"I hear that you are devoting the summer [he writes] to a search of the files of old Catholic papers for data on Dominican missions. This is a good work, and I am glad you are doing it. But don't be surprised or discouraged if you do not find as many accounts of missions given by the fathers as you expected; for, as I believe I have told you before, by no means all their missions were noticed in the papers. Our early missionaries, following the spirit that appears to be traditional in the Order, were strongly opposed to published accounts of their labors. During the years I was head of the eastern band of missionaries the same course was observed though perhaps not quite so rigorously. There were several reasons for this, not the least of which was that we did not think it proper to be boasting of our work. Besides, we thought it better to adhere rather closely to the Order's traditions in such matters. Again, our missions were always so well attended that additional numbers, attracted by notices in the public prints, might at times have been a serious inconvenience to the people of the parishes in which we were employed. This we felt would not be right. It may also be added that we had as many missions as we could well conduct and at the same time safeguard the health of the Fathers engaged in that work.

"At times, but not very often, I gave the representatives of

Catholic papers brief notes on our missions—especially in regard to places, dates, pastors, etc. This was done merely to satisfy the editors who were often provoked at us, and to let the clergy remember that we were engaged in the work. The glowing accounts that appeared here and there, came from the pens of persons who did not belong to the Order. Of late years I have often thought that perhaps, for the sake of the history of our missions, it would have been better if we had done a little more advertising. No doubt this is your opinion. Nor can I now see how such a course would have been blameworthy. In any case, our system prevented accounts of many of our missions (some of the very best) from appearing in the papers at all. For many years I wrote (for myself) records of the missions on which I was engaged; but I discontinued this when I ceased to be director of the missions. I no longer have these records, and do not know what became of them.

"I have written these lines merely to give you some positive knowledge respecting a matter in which I know you to be deeply interested. My days of activity are now over. I am the oldest priest in the Province, and the one whose labors on the missions date back the farthest. So I felt that a word from me on the subject of your studies, while my memory is still good, might both aid you and be a source of authentic information on one of the Province's good works."[1]

Father McKenna had now been director of the eastern missions for more than twelve years. Bravely had he borne the weight of the burden and faced the heat of the day; scrupulously had he discharged his various duties. Success had crowned his efforts in all that he had undertaken. But the good friar had begun to feel the weight of his years, and he was convinced that the responsible position he had held should be placed upon shoulders younger and stronger than his. Other influences that had their part in his deter-

[1] Letter from Blauvelt, New York, August 9, 1916.

mination to seek relief were his belief in the spirit of the Order, which is opposed to perpetuation in office, and the conviction that it is a part of wisdom in a religious institute to train its younger men in the art of governing. Accordingly, at the close of 1892 he gave up his post of honor and stepped down into the ranks with a glad heart.

When the saintly man resigned the position of head of the missions, he had been engaged in that active apostolate more than two and twenty years. During that time he had traversed time and again, in the fulfillment of his vocation, all the country from the Atlantic seaboard to the Mississippi River, and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Few were the large cities in that great stretch of territory that had not profited by his zeal. Many also were the towns, large and small, the hamlets and rural congregations that had reaped the benefit of his labors. So also more than once in these years had he crossed the "Father of Waters," carrying his message of truth to the people beyond its shores and stirring their hearts with his superb eloquence. Possibly no clergyman in the land, whether bishop or priest, had a wider circle of admirers or was more generally known to its Catholic population. Far and wide his name was almost a household word—his repute for pulpit oratory, zeal and holiness second to none.

Few were the cathedrals east of the Mississippi in which Father McKenna had not preached, lectured, given retreats, or conducted missions; in many he had performed all these good offices. His name was familiar to all our bishops. He was admired by all, while with nearly all he was personally acquainted; of

many he was a close and trusted friend. Thus, the noted missioner was at the zenith of his glory and influence when he modestly laid aside a position of honor to serve in the ranks and under obedience to another. His act was of the kind that has often charmed us in the lives of the saints.

As gold in the crucible, so the real character of a priest or a religious is tried in the position of an inferior, where he is subjected to the test of humility. This is especially true when one has grown old in the post of superior and then lays down the reins of authority. Never did Father McKenna's great soul shine with more splendor than after he returned to the rank of a subject; for it was then that it could be seen how completely he had become a man of God. The crowning virtues of the religious life—humility and obedience—which then came into clearer relief, were as complements filling out the great friar's beautiful character. Doubtless it was due to the blessing of God, bestowed as compensation for his zeal and submissive spirit, and for the example he thus gave his younger co-laborers, that Father McKenna, in spite of his age, grew rather than diminished in favor with the Catholic public after his resignation from the position of head of the missions.

Many another with far less reason might have been content to live in ease, to seek happiness in dignified retirement, to glory in past achievements. Not so with Father McKenna. He did not give up the charge of the missions to find rest from labor; nor was he of the kind to be satisfied to bask in glory. His quenchless zeal could not tolerate the one, while his humility forbade the other. He sought no favors; he asked no

exemptions; he placed himself on the same level as the youngest of his confrères; his obedience to authority was not only admirable but edifying; his tireless industry was an inspiration to all; his ardor for souls caused him to continue to seek new means for their salvation.

One good effect of Father McKenna's resigning the charge of the missions was that it gave him more time for his other apostolates. He seems to have multiplied his efforts in the harvest of souls. Indeed, we now find him almost everywhere and engaged in almost every work for the salvation of men—preaching or lecturing on all manner of occasions and topics, giving missions, bringing out new editions of his devotional works, conducting retreats for the clergy and the various sisterhoods and in colleges and seminaries, laboring in the interest of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, broadening his ministry in the cause of the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society. Other sodalities and devotions, though not so noticeably, also felt the benefit of his spiritual touch. Surely the hand of God must have sustained the holy man in his exertions.

During the period of which we now speak (1891–1895), a number of new titles appear among his lectures. Such, for instance, are "Ireland's Faith and Fortitude"; "The Nun in Ireland: Her Trials and Triumphs"; "Marriage a Sacrament"; "Is Christian Marriage a Failure?" The eloquent orator had made so strong an impression with his discourse, "Marriage and Divorce" that he appears to have been urged to discuss the seventh sacrament under its every aspect. Zealous priest that he was, seeking to reach all classes, Father McKenna so ordered his lecture, "The Nun in

Ireland: Her Trials and Triumphs" that it might serve both to convey to the people a truer idea of the heroic and fruitful life of a nun and to give the sisters themselves higher ideals of their character and position as spouses and servants of Christ. This lecture was delivered for many sisterhoods through the country, and we may be assured that, coming from one of the friar's commanding personality and persuasive powers, it did much to encourage these saintly souls in their lives of poverty, labor and self-denial.

It is worthy of note that nearly all of the missionary's lectures were given in behalf of deserving charity. Nor did they fail to draw large audiences. It is not rare that we read in the papers of the day such notices as: "It has been announced that the well known missionary, Very Rev. Charles H. McKenna, O.P., will deliver a lecture [on such or such a subject]. The mention of Father McKenna's name is a sufficient guarantee of the rare treat that is in store for the large audience that will gather to hear the famous Dominican."

Another cause of joy to Father McKenna at this time was the privilege he now enjoyed of devoting himself more especially to men. Thus we find him frequently confining his services to the men's part of the missions. This arrangement, however, rather increased than lessened his labors, since it necessitated more travelling to reach the great number of places to which he was called to assist in reviving the piety of the faithful.

Although the unrelaxed strain began to make serious inroads on the good man's health, he continued his labors until he was at the point of collapse—until, in

fact, it was feared that his end might not be far distant. Physicians urged him to take an ocean voyage and to spend some months in Europe as the surest means of regaining his health. Without suspending his missionary work, Father McKenna wrote to consult his provincial, the Very Rev. A. V. Higgins, from whom he received the following letter, which shows the great esteem in which he was held by the highest superiors of his province and Order:

"ST. MARY'S CHURCH,
"NEW HAVEN, CONN.,
"April 28th, 1895.

"*Dear Father McKenna:*

"A letter came yesterday from the Master General giving you permission to take the European trip. He says that he grants the permission gladly. There are no limits or conditions of any kind. Make it as long as you can, and wherever your fancy leads. May it prove to you full of health and strength and pleasure and every blessing. God knows that you have earned far more than that from the gratitude of the Order; and I am sure that the heart of every brother in the Province will be glad that you should receive so much recognition of your worth and of long, hard services so faithfully and unselfishly devoted to the interests of the Province. At all the shrines and holy places you may visit, I ask a remembrance.

"With much love, yours,
"A. V. HIGGINS, O.P."

The zealous ambassador of Christ was giving a mission at Saint Ann's Church, Philadelphia, when he received the above letter. But, as he had other engagements which, in spite of his illness, he could not bring himself to cancel, it was not until late in May that he sailed for Spain.

The holy missioner, of course, did not fail to visit as

many shrines as his strength permitted; but the one which appealed to his devotion with especial force was the birthplace of Saint Dominic at Caleruega, Old Castile, and thither he directed his steps at once. We can better imagine than portray the pious friar's sentiments—how he poured out his soul in prayer at this famed Castilian shrine so rich in memories and traditions of the saint of all others dear to his heart.

Unfortunately, the missionary's condition did not permit him to go to all the places of interest and devotion he had intended to visit in Spain. From Caleruega he returned to Avila, where he had the happiness of meeting the learned Father General of his Order, Most Rev. Andrew Frühwirth, now a cardinal *in curia*. Between the two priests there arose an intimate friendship which was broken only by the death of Father McKenna. At Avila he visited the birthplace of Saint Teresa and her first establishment of Carmelite Nuns, prayed before her relics, and resolved to read some of her spiritual writings each day. Thence he travelled leisurely to Madrid, Cordova, Seville, Cadiz, Gibraltar, receiving the greatest kindness from his Spanish brethren along the route. From Gibraltar he continued his trip to Genoa, Naples and Pompeii. His health had so improved that he enjoyed to the full his travels in the Spanish and Italian peninsulas from Madrid to Rome.

It was on the evening of Saturday, July 6, that Father McKenna arrived in Rome, much fatigued from his journey. He was able, however, during the following five days to visit a number of the city's chief points of interest and to pray at many of its noted shrines. But on July 11 he was taken so seriously ill that he was advised by his doctors to go north at once

and seek rest at the seashore. But, sick as he was, the missionary was too faithful a servant of God to lose the opportunity now in his hands of furthering the salvation of souls. For years he had sought in vain a relaxation of the ironclad Clementine Constitution that had retarded the growth of the Rosary and Holy Name societies in the United States. When, therefore, he received permission to go to Europe he determined to make a personal appeal to the Holy Father in the name of his brethren in America for leave to establish these confraternities wherever they were desired. As he had already pleaded his cause with the authorities of his Order and had made arrangements for an audience with Leo XIII on July 18, when he intended to lay it before that great Pontiff, he would pay no attention to the advice of physicians until he had fulfilled this mission. Accordingly, the zealous apostle went to Tivoli, where he remained with the Irish Dominicans until the day appointed for the papal audience.

Returning to Rome on the morning of July 18, he went at once with Archbishop Flood to the Vatican, strongly urged Leo XIII to grant the favor he had come so far to solicit in behalf of the Rosary and the Holy Name, and succeeded in obtaining a promise that his request would be favorably considered. As he knew well the deliberateness of Rome, Father McKenna did not expect an immediate answer to his petition, but he hoped that with the aid of prayer his efforts would bring results in the near future. Nor were his expectations to go long unrealized; nay, his zeal was soon to be rewarded with blessings for the apostolates of the Rosary and the Holy Name through all the Christian world.

As the holy priest's continued poor health, culminating in his serious illness, had convinced him that he had not long to live, he determined on his return to America to ask to be relieved from the work of the missions that he might have more time to prepare for the end. This intention he made known to Leo XIII, but the great Pontiff, who knew of the friar's fruitful labors, told him that he must follow his own example and die in the harness. This incident Father McKenna thus records in his diary: "Came to Rome Thursday, and got an audience with the Holy Father. I am now to continue to labor to the end; *and he promised me great reward.*" Never, perhaps, as the reader will see, was papal order more fruitfully followed.

Having satisfied his conscience on these points, Father McKenna prepared to follow the advice of his doctors. On July 19 he left Rome, travelling by easy stages, and stopping at Genoa, Aix-les-Bains, Macon and Paris. His illness was such that he was barely able to say mass, much less to visit points of interest or devotion. He was deeply grieved over his inability to go to Lourdes, so intimately associated with the Blessed Mother of God, towards whom the pious Friar Preacher cultivated the tenderest devotion. Lourdes, indeed, was a place of which he could never grow weary. He felt that the many well-attested miracles wrought there were not only a most practical refutation of the atheism of today, but a strong support for the faith of Catholics in a materialistic and rationalistic age.

It was on July 25 that the missionary reached London, where he was obliged to rest for nearly a week.

The journey thence to Ireland was broken by brief visits to the Dominican Sisters at Stone and the Dominican Fathers of Hawkesyard Priory, Rugely. Arriving at Dublin, the invalid proceeded to Tallaght, twelve miles distant, to say mass at the tomb of the saintly Father Tom Burke and to spend the feast of Saint Dominic (August 4) with his brethren. The next day, although he was very ill, he started for Kilkee, a noted watering-place whose baths had been strongly recommended to him by Archbishop Flood and the Irish Dominicans at Rome.

On the way north from Rome physicians discovered that Father McKenna, as a result of his great labors, was suffering as much from mental as from physical fatigue. Some, indeed, feared that the celebrated missionary might lose his mind. But he was so greatly benefited by the quiet and the bathing at Kilkee that before the end of September he was able to visit the places in Ireland which he wished specially to see.[2] Among these, quite naturally, were Fallalea and Maghera—the place of his birth and the scenes of his early youth. He always seemed to find Ireland the most restful country in the world—possibly because the strong, simple faith of its people, which he thought was not just like that of any other nation, appealed to him and brought no little consolation to his soul. As he spent the remainder of September and October travelling leisurely through the Emerald Isle and England, it was not until in the month of November that he returned to New York.

It was during the period of which we now speak

[2] For the account of Father McKenna's journey from Rome to Ireland we are indebted to the Very Rev. A. L. McMahon, O.P., who accompanied him.

that the writer obtained a knowledge at first-hand of the international reputation that Father McKenna had acquired as an orator and successful missionary. At Rome, and through Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, England and Ireland—wherever, in short, there were Dominicans—all were saddened to hear of the great friar's illness, and prayed for his recovery. All were anxious to meet again, or to see for the first time one of their own of whom they had heard nothing but words of highest praise, and whom they appeared to revere almost as a saint. It was gratifying to see such regard manifested for an American by Europeans, who look upon the people of the United States as given to the cultivation of almost anything rather than holiness.

CHAPTER XX.

FRIENDSHIPS AND VOCATIONS.

THERE is an adage that says: "Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you what you are." Few, if any, of the wise old sayings based on the experience of ages contain a fuller measure of truth. One cannot well rise far above, and is not apt to descend much below, the moral standard of those whom one chooses as friends and confidants; for friendship is one of the most sacred things of life, and those who are bound together by its intimate ties are sure to stand on the same moral plane.

The reader has seen that Father McKenna had numerous admirers throughout the country; that perhaps no ecclesiastic in America was more widely known or more generally revered. So also had he a broad circle of friends. We have known no other who had more; none who loved his friends more truly, or was more truly loved by them. His tender and candid nature went out unstintedly to the good and honest, while the charm of his own personality and earnest, guileless simplicity were as a magnet that drew others to him. No one could prize friendship more highly than he: he regarded it as a blessed thing. With him, to be a friend once was to remain a friend unto the end. And he had in him an indefinable something that attracted people to him, bound them to him, held them to him by the fastest and most affectionate bonds.

More than once in the course of this biography, the

reader's attention has been called to the great missionary's friends; but his friendships formed so noticeable—nay, so extraordinary—a characteristic of his life that they deserve a special word, even at the risk of repetition. But to avoid the undue length that a detailed list of his many friends would necessitate, and at the same time to prevent the wounds that might come from the mention of some and the omission of others, we shall speak here of this remarkable trait of the pious priest only in outline. His charity, especially for the poor, the afflicted and the suffering, knew no bounds. Without hesitation he would deprive himself even of the necessities of life for others. On more than one occasion has he been known to give his overcoat in the coldest weather to some destitute person whom he chanced to meet in the street, thus exposing his own health, or even his life. God alone knows how often, or in how many ways, the great churchman has gone to the assistance of the poor of Christ in the hour of need and tribulation. The virtue of affection for his kindred he possessed in a high degree. But his love and appreciation of his friends had something in it that appeared to be quite special—peculiar, indeed, to himself. He never forgot them; it was one of the joys of his life to meet them, or to have them with him; there was no inconvenience, however great, that he would not readily undergo for them.

Father McKenna counted his friends among people of every walk and station of life. The poor and the lowly came to him because of his kindness of heart; the sinner for spiritual help and consolation; the good for counsel and guidance. It was his character and his virtues that drew the hierarchy and the clergy to

him, for they found in him the true religious, the true priest, the true man of God whose personality was irresistible, whose prayers they desired. While the missionary's retiring disposition prevented him from seeking any one's friendship, his open and trustful candor impelled him to accept it when it was tendered.

Father McKenna's labors carried him into almost every part of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. In his wide travels and in the exercise of his long, extensive ministry he came into contact with thousands of our Catholic clergy and nearly all the American hierarchy of the past forty years, and most of them became his friends.

During the past twenty-five years, in whatever part of the country a member of the Order of Saint Dominic happened to travel, he was sure to be greeted with the question: "How is my friend, good old Father McKenna?" invariably followed by remarks such as: "Father McKenna is the greatest missionary the United States has ever produced"; "There is a man who is one of the brightest ornaments of his Order and of the American Church"; "There surely is a true priest, a true man of God and a saint"; "I have never heard any one whose preaching pleased me so well"; "I have never met a priest whom I liked so much"; "I have never cherished the friendship of any one as I cherish his"; "He is one of the greatest ecclesiastical orators the country has seen"; "I wish I were as sure of heaven as that man," and so on. Nor were such observations confined to the diocesan clergy; they came also from the laity, from members of every religious order, from bishops and archbishops alike. His lay friends were not less numerous than his clerical. We

have never heard of any layman who was a friend of the illustrious friar, and who was not also an exemplary Catholic. Bishop Shahan has told us how many of these eagerly awaited the time when Father McKenna in his constant travels would come to their city, that they might lay bare their souls to him, and seek his spiritual counsel and guidance.

The respect and reverence shown Father McKenna on all occasions was remarkable. It has been the good fortune of the writer to attend a number of clerical gatherings such as church dedications, layings of corner-stones, etc., at which the venerable clergyman was present. Invariably he seemed to be singled out for special attention. People appeared to regard it as an honor to meet the humble missioner—to consider it a blessing to be allowed to take his hand in a hearty grasp.

As an illustration, we will mention two striking instances from among the many that have come under our own personal observation. One was at the seventh centenary celebration of the papal confirmation of the Order of Friars Preacher, held at the Dominican College, Washington, D. C., November 14–19, 1916. A most vivid and pleasant recollection is the visit of felicitation paid by the cardinals, the Apostolic Delegate, the bishops and the clergy who attended the celebration, to the grand old friar's cell. All were profuse in their praises of his virtues and of his labors in the cause of religion.

A yet more noticeable instance took place in April, 1908, during the historic centennial celebration of the establishment of the diocese of New York. Tuesday, April 28, was devoted to the religious solemnities held

in the stately Gothic cathedral of Saint Patrick. The different religious orders were numerously represented, while hundreds of secular priests and monsignori from far and near were in attendance. The great clerical throng formed in line, and, followed by members of the hierarchy, marched into the cathedral for the mass. The place assigned the Dominicans was on the right of the main aisle about two thirds the way towards the altar-rail. When the monsignori, bishops and archbishops reached this place, seeing Father McKenna seated among his brethren, they halted as if by agreement to bow to him. Many of them stepped into the pew where the venerable missioner sat to take his hand and to speak a kind word. Surely this action of the church dignitaries on so solemn an occasion and in the presence of thousands was an extraordinary token of friendship, love and esteem—a tribute greater than which it would be hard to pay a simple priest.

But Father McKenna was the recipient of many other expressions of regard perhaps as remarkable as these. At more than one Holy Name rally, when the church was packed with members of the society, the great audience, to show their reverence for the holy friar, rose in a body at the mention of his name in the course of the sermon. Quite likely many of the readers of this volume will remember having been present on some such occasion. Again, various persons have assured the writer that at similar gatherings the mention of Father McKenna stirred the audience so visibly that they feared it would lead to noisy applause in the house of God.

Still another extraordinary manifestation of the high regard in which the distinguished religious was held,

and similar to that given at the centennial celebration of the diocese of New York, occurred at the funeral of Archbishop Ryan of Philadelphia, Thursday, February 16, 1911. Archbishops, bishops and noted clergymen from all parts of the country attended the obsequies of that great prelate. The clerical procession which marched from the archiepiscopal residence to the cathedral, halted for a time in Logan Square in front of the doors of the stately edifice. There the hierarchy noticed the presence of Father McKenna, and to a man they left their places to speak to the venerable apostle of God and to wish him many years in the service of the Divine Master.

To many, such tokens of esteem might have been the occasion of no little pride. But the humble religious, although he would not have been quite human had he not experienced some gratification in the realization of the love and esteem in which he was held, referred all such glory to God, whose cause he ever sought to advance rather than his own. With him honor served not as a pretext to rest on laurels won, but as an incentive to further service.

Intimately associated with the gentle affection that brought Father McKenna so many friends was his zeal in fostering vocations to the priesthood. Indeed it constitutes so striking a trait in the good friar's life and was so conspicuous an apostolate in his long career, that a biography of Father McKenna would necessarily be incomplete, unless it devoted some pages specially to his activity along this line.

The missionary keenly appreciated the great and far-reaching good a priest may accomplish by wisely fostering sacerdotal vocations. He realized that many

vocations are lost to the Church from lack of encouragement—that an ambassador of Christ who does not exert himself to bring worthy successors into the service of the ministry, is neglectful of one of the first duties belonging to his divine calling. Father McKenna was wont to compare such a one to the barren tree of the Scriptures that bore no fruit. His inborn affection for boys and young men was of great aid to him in the exercise of this fruitful apostolate. It drew them to him, bound them to him in a most intimate way, while it gave him an insight that often enabled him to detect a vocation where one was least suspected.

This trait, characteristic of the great missionary even in the early days of his priestly career, became more and more pronounced as the years rolled by until encouragement of vocations became a passion with him. But it was a passion that was guided by wisdom and prudence. A most worthy minister himself, he could not bear the idea of the unworthy administering the sacred things of God. And while, as the years increased his experience, he perhaps grew milder and more indulgent in his judgment of men, he became more and more careful and exacting in his selection of those whom he deemed suitable to guide the souls of others.

For some reason Father McKenna appeared to be convinced that the most promising material for the priesthood was to be found among the sons of those whose circumstances compelled them to labor and to economize. Thus, although he never hesitated to foster any vocation which seemed to give promise, it was among the laboring classes that he expected the most generous response to the call divine. With young men

of this class, too, he apparently took more pains, aiding them with greater zeal. His own early life probably caused him to feel more keenly for the poor. The trials and disappointments of his youth, which he did not hesitate to make known to those whose vocations he sought to foster, were assuredly calculated to encourage the poor aspirant to the priestly office, or to give him strength and determination to persevere in the face of difficulties. Doubtless, many a worthy Catholic clergyman in the United States owes the attainment of his heart's highest aspirations to the stimulation given him by the missionary's heroic early life.

Father McKenna's earliest missionary labors brought him into frequent contact with splendid young men who were ardently desirous of entering the priesthood, but were kept back by their meager education and the lack of means to surmount this difficulty. Knowing as he did the great need of harvesters in the Lord's vineyard, the zealous priest's soul was torn at the sight of numerous vocations thus lost to the Church no less than at the idea of many pure hearts being subjected to the sorrows which he himself had experienced in his youth. Accordingly, he determined with the permission of his superiors to contrive some means of giving aid to as many as possible of the most deserving candidates who entrusted him with their secret. Indeed, he would willingly have devoted himself exclusively to the work of assisting those unable to do for themselves, for he believed that in this way much might be done both to extend "the Kingdom of God on earth" and to garner souls for heaven.

Father McKenna's gentleness, zeal and holiness brought to him people from every walk of life for

consultation or advice on affairs of the soul, among them many persons of means. More than one of these, he felt, would readily extend the hand of help to young men whose pecuniary circumstances closed for them the door to the priesthood. To others, who sought for advice regarding the distribution of their charity, he suggested its direction towards this worthy object.

The holy man's next step was to seek permission from his superiors to accept and to use money for the purpose of preparing worthy boys for the priesthood, for without such authorization he could do nothing in the cause, noble though it was. Permission granted, he began at once to use the confidence and good-will that people reposed in him to secure means for the education of poor boys and young men for the clerical state. In this, as in all his undertakings, he met with conspicuous success. And no wonder, for the blessing of God was on everything he did and everything he said. On the one hand, the evidences of his interior piety were such that they removed from his friends and admirers all suspicion of unworthy motive or selfish interest on his part; on the other, his deep sympathy and fatherly manner laid low all barriers of timidity or reserve on the part of youths with sacerdotal aspirations, bringing them to him in numbers.

Suiting the action to the thought, Father McKenna sought to advance the holy cause in various ways. At times he persuaded one or more charitable persons to defray the expense of a classical education for some individual young man, which they could do either by paying the college directly for his board and tuition,

or by remittances to the friar himself. At times he accepted a sum of money—oftener small than large—, or a yearly contribution, to be used in his good work at his own discretion. In order to aid a greater number, if a student was able to pay a part of his expenses, Father McKenna insisted that he do so. Again, he strongly urged those whom he had assisted in the attainment of their hearts' desire in the secular priesthood not to forget to do unto other worthy young men what had been done for them in their day of need. Not infrequently he had the satisfaction of knowing that his advice was heeded.

It speaks well for Father McKenna's practical wisdom that he limited the period of assistance to his protégés to their classical course; that is, to the time when they should be prepared for entrance into the seminary or into the novitiate of a religious order. After that he knew they would be accepted wherever they made application. By this plan he was enabled to husband the means at his disposal and to extend help to a greater number. And in all these ministrations of charity the holy friar was not less careful to guard his own humility, and the feelings of those he thus aided, from publicity than he was to protect his conscience by permission from his superiors to use money even for so holy a purpose. So, too, he sought to let one hand know as little as possible of the good that was done by the other.

One might fancy that Father McKenna's simplicity, trustful nature and tenderness of heart would have caused him frequently to be deceived or imposed upon. But not so. He was endowed with a practical mind, and possessed a keen insight that guided his judgment.

We do not, of course, pretend to say that he made no mistakes. Had he made none, he would have been more than human. But we do say that, supernatural man that he was, putting his trust in God rather than in himself, his errors were few, considering the number of cases he had to decide—fewer, perhaps, than would have been made by those who depend solely upon human wisdom.

Father McKenna's charity was too broad to be confined to his own religious organization. It was so broad that it may be said to have known no distinction. He believed that God, in giving the vocation, also suggested the place or station to which He called the aspirant. Acting on this belief, he never tried to induce a young man to become a religious rather than a secular priest, or vice versa, or to enter one order rather than another. His one aim in this apostolate was to provide the vineyard of the Church with as many worthy ministers as possible. He left it to his protégés to determine, under the suggestion of God, in what sphere they wished to labor. Whatever their determination, the good missionary, if it lay in his power, was ready to extend a helping hand. Far from influencing the choice of any one in so sacred a matter, he never made even a suggestion, except at the urgent request of one who was unable to decide for himself.

It would be difficult to say how many young men were thus enabled by our apostle of vocations to attain to the priesthood during the forty and more years that he devoted to this particular work. On one occasion when the writer made bold to ask him the number, the answer was: "Perhaps the least said on that subject the better; but there must have been two hundred or

more." It is to the credit of his liberal spirit that the greater number entered the ranks of the diocesan clergy. The priests who, in this way, came under the great friar's influence are to be found in many of the dioceses east of the Mississippi River. Some he sent farther west, where the laborers were fewer.

Besides those aided by Father McKenna in this practical way, many other clergymen had recourse to him in the hour of doubt to decide their vocation. Nearly all with whom he came into such intimate contact—whether by spiritual or by financial assistance—became zealous and useful priests. Some of them have worn the mitre; others have risen to distinction in the literary and intellectual world or in various fields of ecclesiastical activity.

By a deliberate choice, born of the conviction that there lay the field where he could effect the greater good, Father McKenna directed his apostolic labors more to men than to women. It was in the same spirit that he gave more attention to vocations for the priesthood than to vocations for the various sisterhoods. Yet, as on the missions, so in the direction of their lives and their vocations he did much for the spiritual welfare of women. Many communities of women scattered throughout the country have to thank him for useful members sent to them. Thus while few, if any, American priests have been more sought after by the hierarchy for special missions to such religious houses, not until the day of recompense will it be known how many young ladies sought the saintly friar's spiritual counsel and direction and were happily guided by him to "the better way."

CHAPTER XXI.

FRUITFUL LABORS.

(1896–1900)

FATHER MCKENNA was singularly blessed with a buoyant disposition that nothing could depress, retaining a youthful spirit which made him ever eager to be at work. Thus, although he still suffered from the effects of his late illness when he returned to America, he was anxious, to use his own expression, "to be in harness again." Fortunately, nature had endowed him with extraordinary powers of recuperation. This surely saved him from another breakdown, for we soon find him again busily engaged in all manner of apostolic labor. But one cannot overestimate how much the realization of the good he was accomplishing sustained the missionary. This was as a medicine that gave him strength of both body and soul.

It was not long, indeed, before Father McKenna was completely his former self. His voice had lost none of its rich resonance, strength or flexibility; his oratory none of its fire or power of attraction; his personality none of its charm. Wherever he went, crowds continued to flock to hear his sermons or his lectures—hung breathless upon his eloquent words. While he always met with the most signal success after his return from Europe, perhaps in no place did he receive a warmer welcome from the people than at Augusta, Georgia. His efforts there, in view of the peculiar circumstances, deserve a special word.

The mission at Saint Patrick's Church, Augusta, opened January 26, 1896, and created a sensation the like of which the quiet southern town had perhaps never known before. The interest of the people was aroused to such a pitch that the inclement weather could not dampen their ardor. Protestant vied with Catholic in attending the sermons. In any part of the country the presence of a non-Catholic divine at the services of a Catholic mission is unusual; in the south it is extraordinary. Yet at Augusta nearly all the ministers of the city turned out evening after evening to hear Father McKenna preach. Nor was this all. They were so charmed with the saintly man's personality, and so pleased with his preaching, that they prayed for the success of the work in which he was engaged. Day after day the public press, especially the *Augusta Chronicle,* gave a synopsis of his discourses, spoke of the crowds that came to the church, told of how the audience was spellbound by the eloquent Dominican.

Father McKenna was always solicitous to receive suggestions from the clergy for whom he labored, with regard to the needs of their people. Possibly, therefore, it was at the request of the pastor of Augusta that the sermons preached at this mission were mostly of a dogmatical character; for the Rev. P. H. McMahon writes twenty years later:

"It was the greatest mission ever held here, and is still used as the comparison or standard for all other missions. I invited Very Rev. Father McKenna to give the mission, but before he came, I took care to give him an outline of conditions here and of how I thought he could meet them. He followed my advice and in every way won the attendance of the whole city, Catholic

and Protestant alike. Our services were crowded to the doors—even the space within the sanctuary was filled—by Jew and Protestant and Catholic, whilst hundreds were turned away. The venerable old man never failed, and holding the doctrines of the Church secure and good, he so carefully handled the non-Catholic view-point that he won them to him as a community. . . ."[1]

The impression made upon his southern audiences by the great missioner was such that the non-Catholics joined with the Catholics in a petition that he would remain over in Augusta to deliver his lecture on marriage and divorce the night after the close of the mission. Of the effect of the lecture and how it was attended the *Augusta Chronicle* of February 4, 1896, says:

"From portal to altar rail, and even inside the rail at the side altars, at St. Patrick's Church last night, the crowd of interested listeners were packed and jammed. Those present represented all classes and creeds in the city. Seldom has an audience in Augusta been more charmingly entertained, or listened to a more forceful and graceful speaker than the one who swayed that immense congregation on the subject which is agitating the public at this time, 'Marriage and its sometimes unhappy consequence—Divorce.' . . . It remained for his audience to judge what a word painter the eminent speaker is, and how strongly his appeals went to the hearts of his hearers. This, his last lecture, will always remain as a gem of its kind, and those who were fortunate enough to have been present at even one discourse will only hope that ere long this man of God will return to the field which he has planted with so much tenderness and care."

The Augusta mission is not an exceptional illustration of how the missionary could sway at will even non-

[1] Letter of December 12, 1916.

Catholics; but that he could do this in a locality so prejudiced as Georgia certainly shows that he possessed great tact, as well as rare oratorical powers. It was always noticed that Father McKenna even in his strongest sermons, whether excoriating sin or upholding the doctrine of the Church, never wounded the feelings of any class. At Augusta he met, received into the Third Order of Saint Dominic and formed a lifelong friendship with the distinguished writer, journalist and poet, James R. Randall, the author of *Maryland, My Maryland.*

It was perhaps the great missionary's deep piety and consuming charity, as much as his eloquence and kindly disposition, that made so strong an impression on the non-Catholics of the south and elsewhere. Of this we have the unbiased and valuable testimony of the well-known novelist, Mrs. Amelia E. Barr, a Methodist and the daughter of a Methodist minister. Mrs. Barr, in her autobiography (D. Appleton and Company, 1913, page 384), thus tells us of her difficulty in preventing her daughter Lilly from becoming a Catholic, and of the influence that Father McKenna's life exercised on that young lady.

"At one time it took all my pleading and influence, and all Dr. Tyang's eloquence to keep her out of a convent, and I had a year or two of constant fear and watchfulness. This was the year we lived on Lexington avenue, opposite the Dominican church. There was at that time a priest there called Father McKenna, a holy man entirely separate from the world, night and day either before the altar or among the most miserable of the living and dying; and I think he was her inspiration. . . ."

We have dwelt at length on this southern mission, not because it stands apart in the missioner's labors

at that time, but because it was an apt sample at hand of the success that everywhere attended his labors through all 1896 and 1897. Naturally the interest of the people in places where he appeared for the first time was keener and the comments of the press longer and more eulogistic; yet, however often he returned to a church or a city, he was sure to draw immense audiences. If this is a proof of exceptional oratory, as we think it is, then the zealous Dominican must go down in history as one of the country's foremost pulpit speakers.

As has been stated, one of the principal objects of Father McKenna's journey to Rome in 1895 was to make an appeal in person for the revocation or the modification of the Constitution "*Quaecumque*" of Clement VIII, issued, December 8, 1604, which forbade the existence of the Rosary or the Holy Name Society in more than one church in any city. Returning from Augusta, the missionary continued his apostolate through the north and east with little thought of hearing from Rome so promptly. But some time in the summer of 1896 he received a copy of a rescript of the Congregation of Indulgences, dated May 20, containing the information that Leo XIII had so far dispensed with the Clementine Constitution as to leave the establishment of the Rosary and the Holy Name practically in the hands of the hierarchy. The good news gladdened Father McKenna's heart, and his joy must have been all the greater because of the realization that it was largely through his efforts that the dispensation had been granted.

Father McKenna was now in his sixty-second year, and felt that his services on the missions might be dis-

pensed with and believed that he could be the instrument of greater good by consecrating his remaining years solely to the propaganda of the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society. Accordingly, he wrote Father Higgins for permission to give up the missions and devote himself to these societies. But the time was not yet ripe for his purpose. While the reply he received refused his request, it was most kindly and contained as great a tribute as the most faithful priest could reasonably desire. We give the document in its entirety, because it shows both the esteem in which Father McKenna was held by his provincial and the difficulties he had to overcome in procuring a modification of the Clementine Constitution.

"St. Mary's of the Springs,
"Sept. 26th, 1896.

"*Dear Father McKenna:*

"Many thanks for the '*Intentions.*' They will be said at once. It gives me great pleasure that your health is keeping up so well. I pray God fervently that He will spare you long to work for Him in whatever service pleases Him best. Just as yet I cannot bring myself to look favorably on any project that would separate you from our missions. You have made our missions what they are. Your name insures to them esteem and respectability and fruitfulness. They would suffer greatly in the appreciation of the secular clergy and of the Bishops, if it were understood that you are no longer connected with them.

"Again, the establishment of the Rosary Society is under so many restrictions, and is hampered by so much red tape, that the prospect of spreading the devotion is most discouraging. The Master General writes me that we are not a privileged Province. In each single case we must write to Rome for faculties to establish the Rosary Confraternity. In each single case the name of

the priest and of the parish must be sent to Rome. In each single case the name of the priest who is to preach the sermon, or should he be impeded, the name of his substitute must be sent to Rome. These formalities and embarrassments will have the effect of killing the devotion.

"I have written an urgent letter begging the Master General to obtain for us such faculties as some privileged Provinces in the Order enjoy, and such as we used to enjoy. But I have little hope of a favorable answer. Indeed, the Master General intimates that the Prefect of the Congregation *supra indulgentiis* has refused such a favor in anticipation. Under such circumstances there is little encouragement to undertake the preaching of the Rosary. With all the difficulties that are now thrown in the way of establishing a Rosary confraternity in any parish, I can hardly understand how you would go about the work of your mission at all. Faculties are no longer given *in globo* and *albo*, with permission to write the name of the parish and of the priest; but in each single instance you must go through all the formalities and undergo all the delays that I have explained. As it seems to me, the new legislation has dealt a death-blow to the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary.

"I am very sorry to put any obstacle in the way of what you have at heart, but feel sure that under the circumstances you will recognize it as an impossibility to put in operation the mission to which you are anxious to devote the last years of your life. Believe me that I love you and reverence you with all my heart. And if what you propose did not seem so utterly impracticable, I should hesitate very much to refuse your project my approval and sanction.

"With much love, yours,

"A. V. Higgins, O.P."

The provincial evidently speaks of a correspondence with Father Frühwirth, the General of the Dominicans, at a date prior to the issuance of the sacred congregation's rescript. Neither had he seen the rescript,

which did not appear in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* until November. Besides, Father Higgins, probably owing to the haste with which the General's and Father McKenna's letters were perused and his own written, falls into some minor errors. He assumes, for instance, that the missionary wished to devote all his energies to preaching the Rosary, whereas the saintly apostle requested to be allowed to give himself up to the propaganda of the Rosary Confraternity conjointly with that of the society of the Holy Name.

Again, the apparent assertion that the province had formerly enjoyed the privilege of establishing the Rosary anywhere, with no other obligation than that of reporting to Rome, is not quite correct. The privilege —and this applies to the Holy Name also—was restricted to places where the society did not exist. It did not permit the institution or the existence of either society in more than one parish in a city without an appeal to Rome in each instance. The precise point at issue was an authorization to erect, without such an appeal, both confraternities in as many churches of any city as might desire to have them. This, indeed, was what Father McKenna and others had long sought to procure, and what the Congregation of Indulgences was so loath to give. That a favor so beneficial to the apostolates of the Rosary and the Holy Name was finally granted was due, it is said, in no small measure to the personal pleading of the saintly missionary before the General of the Dominicans and Leo XIII. The reluctance on the part of the prefect of the Congregation of Indulgences to depart from the Constitution of Clement VIII can be seen from Father Higgins' letter, and appears to be shown by the tone of the rescript of the sacred congregation itself.

Obedient religious that he was, Father McKenna gracefully bowed to the voice of authority, and continued his labors as a missionary. At first we find him plying his vocation of winning souls to God in the east; but the impression that he had created at Augusta, Georgia, brought him so many calls from various places in the south that he spent there a considerable portion of the following year.

The month of January, for instance, was mostly spent giving missions in Memphis, Tennessee, and Charleston, South Carolina. From Charleston he went to Augusta to fulfill his promise given the year before to the pastor and people of that city to deliver a course of doctrinal lectures he had already delivered in many places. His subjects on this occasion were: "Christian Union, or God our Father"; "The Divinity of Christ"; "Faith"; "The Power of Priests to Forgive Sins"; "The Infallibility of the Church"; and "The Divine Motherhood of Mary." The reception given him was not less cordial than the one he had received there in 1896; the sensation created not less pronounced.

In the early part of this year Father McKenna was requested to deliver a sermon on a subject that was unusual to him. The occasion was the consecration of the Right Rev. James E. Quigley as bishop of Buffalo, which took place in the cathedral of that city, February 24, 1897. As Bishop Quigley's invitation was not received by the missionary until shortly before the event, and as he was busily engaged, he had little time for preparation. Yet his distinguished audience and his new friend in the hierarchy were greatly pleased with the discourse.

It has frequently been asserted that the late archbishop of Chicago was in the seminary when he first met Father McKenna, and served his mass at the time; that after the mass the distinguished missionary said to the pious student: "My dear young man, some day you will be a bishop"; that the seminarian's reply was: "Well, father, if I do, I want you to preach the sermon at my consecration"; and that this banter or prophecy, whichever it was, led to the celebrated missionary's being requested to deliver the discourse of which we have spoken. However this may be, there are so many authenticated instances of Father McKenna's foretelling young men or young ladies their vocation for the priesthood or the cloister, although they had not thought of such a thing before, that one is almost constrained to believe that he was at times endowed with a foresight that is given but to few.

Father McKenna had long suffered from a serious ailment of the stomach brought on by excess of labor, nervous strain and the continual change of diet incident to his mode of life. Shortly after his return from Europe, however, he obtained a prescription from a noted specialist in New York which gave him not only great relief, but apparently new strength and new energy to continue his work. As usual, his attention was not confined to the apostolate of the missions. His charity, which was as broad as his faith, extended to and sought to aid everything that tended to magnify the glory of God, to advance the cause of the Church or to further the spiritual interests of men. Like another Paul, he journeyed up and down, back and forth, through the country, becoming all things to all men that he might win all for Christ. But here

we cannot do better than let the Very Rev. L. F. Kearney, who was elected provincial, October, 1897, and thereafter labored much with Father McKenna on the missions, tell of the holy man's zeal and labors.

"St. Thomas' Church, Zanesville, Ohio,
"February 20, 1917.

"*Dear Father:*

"I am pleased to learn that you are preparing a sketch of the life and labors of Father McKenna. If I can in any way be of assistance to you in your work, you have but to call upon my services; but I fancy I can give you no facts of his public career which you do not already possess. It gives me pleasure, however, to bear witness to his wonderful apostolic spirit, of which I had so many evidences during the twelve years of my provincialship. During the first years of that period I often wondered how, in spite of his advanced age, he could stand so much work. His zeal was unquenchable; and he retained all that fire and animation, when in the pulpit, which had led the people from the beginning to regard him as possessing a gift akin to divine inspiration. I was frequently associated with him in the work of the missions and was impressed with the manner in which his fervid eloquence swayed his audiences. Later on—in the early years of the present century—, as his strength began to fail so that he could not endure the continued strain of the missions, it was suggested that he retire from active duty and enjoy the rest from labor which he had so well earned. His zeal for God's glory and his love of souls would not permit him to accept this suggestion, and he begged to be allowed at least to continue at his work of establishing the Confraternity of the Rosary and the Holy Name Society that he might devote his declining days to the furtherance of the glory of God and the salvation of souls through these two devotions which were dear to his heart. The request, which was just what one would expect of Father McKenna, because so characteristic of his zeal and piety, was granted. We all, of course, know of the wonderful things he

accomplished through the two societies in the last years of his life. Some time after he began to devote himself almost exclusively to this work, he told me that, while he was resigned to God's holy will, he prayed that he might be granted health and strength to glorify the Holy Name and to spread devotion to the Queen of the Rosary for a long time to come. His prayer was granted. It is given to but few to labor so strenuously for so long a period in the vineyard of the Master.

"A truly great apostle was Father McKenna, a man who has exerted an influence of the highest kind upon numberless souls in our country, one who has shed lustre upon the Dominican province of St. Joseph—'*Vir apostolici pectoris, magnus animarum oeconomus, ornamentum et decus Ordinis.*'

"Wishing you every success in your labors, I am,

"Yours sincerely in Christ and St. Dominic,

"L. F. KEARNEY, O.P."

Father Kearney's labors with the venerable missionary began in Philadelphia, to whose Church he had given much of his time from 1890. Of Father McKenna's labors and popularity there the reader may judge from the subjoined letters of the Most Rev. Edmond F. Prendergast and the Right Rev. Philip R. McDevitt of Harrisburg, the former of whom was auxiliary bishop at the time of which we write, and the latter pastor of the Church of the Nativity.

"ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,

"March 15, 1917.

"*Very Rev. and dear Father:*

"I have known and esteemed good, holy Father Charles H. McKenna, O.P., for many years, and I wish to express my unqualified admiration for his many virtues, for his priestly zeal and deportment, and for his extraordinary powers as a preacher of the Word of God. My acquaintance with and high regard for him began with a mission which he conducted in St. Mal-

achy's parish, Philadelphia, some forty years ago. I remember well how he held the great audience, filling every part of the church, spell-bound and fascinated from the moment he appeared on the altar until the close of the sermon. His spiritual countenance, his impressive, dignified figure, clothed in the white robes of his Order, his manner of clothing his thoughts, his graceful and most forcible gesticulation and a resonant voice that could be heard distinctly in every part of the edifice—all combined to bring home to the assembled congregation the sublime truths of religion. His language was simple and easily understood, not a word being lost to his hearers. He was to me the ideal missionary—eloquent, powerful to move the minds of his audience and possessed of that unction which made his words direct messages from the Holy Spirit.

"All this I know of one of his early missions in this diocese. And I have no hesitation in saying, both because of what I have seen and experienced myself and because of what I have heard from others, that his labors during the long years he remained on the missionary band were equally successful not only in the city of Philadelphia, but in almost every part of the country. With me personally the impression which he made at the time we first met, has grown with two-score years. In your memorial, no doubt, some account will be given of his career, of the number of missions he conducted throughout the country, of the priestly virtues which characterized him, of his benign influence as the Apostle of the Holy Name Society, of his labors in the cause of the Rosary and devotion to our Blessed Lady, and of other fruits of his zeal. May he be remembered in the prayers of the thousands who benefited by his extraordinary gifts—both of those who are now in heaven, and of those who are still on earth—and have to thank God for the graces they received through the saintly Dominican in his long and glorious life as a priest and missionary.

"Yours sincerely in Christ,

"E. F. Prendergast,

"*Archbishop of Philadelphia.*"

Bishop McDevitt, writing to Rev. Bernard A. McKenna of the Catholic University, March 24, 1917, says in the same connection:

"My admiration and reverence for saintly Father McKenna began about thirty years ago, at the time he was giving the first of four successive missions at the Church of the Nativity, B.V.M. Perhaps the following comment, made after the close of the fourth mission, in 1897, and published in the parish calendar, is more truly appreciative of his impressive personality than any words I might write at present. 'Our people should ever hold in benediction the memory of Father McKenna, the masterful spirit of the Dominican missions, and the greatest missionary of this generation. During the past ten years his zeal and eloquence have inspired them with the love of higher and better things. The blessings which the Nativity parish has enjoyed, has been granted to countless parishes the country over. We trust the day is far distant when Father McKenna's eloquent voice will cease to exercise its marvelous power for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.' Happily, providence made that day far distant which marked the fruition of a life certainly unsurpassed in the annals of missionary labors in the United States."

The letters of these two distinguished prelates express the mind of the clergy generally for whom Father McKenna labored in the long course of his apostolic life. It was principally during the period extending from the fall of 1897 to that of 1900—a period in which the fathers of the province gave many great missions—that Father Kearney came into such close contact with the earnest apostle and witnessed the effect of the zeal of which he has told us. Buoyed up by his fervor, in spite of his more than three-score years, Father McKenna was perhaps the only one who

failed to notice the extraordinary phenomenon of his labors.

We shall not, of course, attempt to follow the holy man to all the places he went at this time in his harvest of souls. To do so would only tire the reader with a repetition of what has already been told, perhaps too often; and to mention the names of states, cities, towns and churches with which he has become familiar in the course of these pages, would not add to the interest of our narrative. Suffice it, then, to say that we have found mention of nearly forty missions in which Father McKenna took part during these three years. Some of them extended over three or four weeks. All entailed much hard labor and long hours in the confessional, but the grand old man was able to take his turn with his co-laborers, though they were all younger than he. Wherever he went, his zeal and his eloquence were the cause of keen joy to both pastors and people.

But a few of the spiritual revivals in which the aged missioner took part during the present period seem to demand a word. The first of these was a mission given at Saint Mary's, Baltimore, in October, 1897. It was here that Messrs. John T. Morris and Walter E. McCann, dramatic editors respectively of the Baltimore *Sun* and the *Evening News,* went to hear the noted preacher. Both pronounced him one of the best orators they had ever heard, and declared that in the vocation of Father McKenna the Church's pulpit had been benefited at the expense of the stage. Under the caption of "A Dramatic Scene", Mr. McCann wrote his impressions of the closing sermon of the mission which appeared in the *Catholic Mirror* and

was thence widely copied by the Catholic press of the country.[2]

The mission at Saint Mary's was followed, early in 1898, by others not less noteworthy in Atlanta and at the cathedrals of Charleston and Boston. Perhaps, indeed, there was no priest in the country who could have produced a stronger impression than Father McKenna on the minds of the people in the south, where the Church, proportionately speaking, has made less progress than in any other section of the United States. It has been seen that rarely did the missionary's preaching fail to cause the return of many wayward Catholics. The mission at Atlanta, in January, 1898, was a striking example of this. Among those in this city whom he was the instrument in bringing back to the practice of their religion was a noted statesman and former judge. This man, although a devout Catholic in his younger days, had given up his Church, and all efforts by others to induce him to return had proved fruitless. His conversion by Father McKenna was considered by many as miraculous.

A mission similar in results and enthusiasm to that in Atlanta was one he conducted at Saint Gabriel's, Hazelton, Pennsylvania, in October, the same year, and which appears to be the last he preached in the mining towns of that state. Father McKenna was extremely popular with the large mining population of Pennsylvania, and did some of his most effective work among them. It was his custom, when laboring in these towns, to station himself after an early mass along the roads that led to the mines and to give a cordial greeting to the passing workmen whom he judged to be

[2] *The Catholic Mirror*, November 6, 1897.

Catholics. In many instances the missionary's simple words made so strong an impression upon the miners that they later laid down their tools and returned to make the mission. Finally, the mission he conducted in the cathedral of Baltimore, May, 1899, was considered one of the most successful ever given in Maryland's metropolis. The writer has heard Cardinal Gibbons say that he thought he had never heard the Word of God preached with more telling force than on that occasion. In spite of the many years that have passed, the memory of this mission is still vivid in Baltimore.

In this way the zealous gleaner of souls went from place to place, even to Montreal and Halifax, in the fulfillment of his vocation. He was the type of man to whom the sinner would instinctively appeal as the physician to cure the ills of his soul. While the holy man's eloquent preaching, ascetic countenance and winsome ways doubtless had much to do in bringing many of his hearers to confession, the lasting success of his missions, we think, was due still more to the irresistible fatherly advice he gave in the sacred tribunal. It was, indeed, an inspiration to younger clergymen to see one of Father McKenna's advanced years devote so many hours to the drudgery of the confessional. And this he did not only with patience, but with a devotion and a fidelity which all were forced to admire. How many souls Father McKenna thus healed and solaced or helped to a still higher and better life, is known only to the Creator.

As the hard-working Dominican devoted much of the summers of this period to retreats, his vacations were few and brief. But we shall mention only the re-

treat he gave to the clergy of the diocese of Fort Wayne at Notre Dame University—his second there—in July, 1889. A thorough religious and holy priest himself, Father McKenna was always much at home when conducting such spirtual exercises for those of his own state of life. His retreats at Notre Dame are still remembered and regarded as among the best ever given at that noble institution.

But Father McKenna's zeal as a churchman did not cause him to neglect his obligations as a patriotic citizen. Although he always retained a deep affection for his native land, our friar missionary was most devoted to his adopted country, loving its institutions and its spirt of liberty and equality. No sooner had he attained the age of manhood than he procured his papers of naturalization, and thenceforth took the keenest interest in all that regarded the welfare of the great American republic. He did not, however, align himself with any political party, or give his vote to a candidate for office because he belonged to any particular organization. In affairs of state, as in all things else, the earnest Dominican studied men and the questions at issue, and voted for those from whose honesty and ability he judged more might be expected for the good of the commonwealth. Though not often, we find him at times speaking (at the request of others) on issues in which the public was interested. In these patriotic discourses the noted orator gave scarcely less satisfaction to his audiences than in his sermons and lectures. Through all his long priestly career, even in the fulfillment of his duties as a minister of the Gospel, he sought to inculcate the cultivation of every civic virtue.

Father McKenna's knowledge of history and his experience, during his years as a clerical student and young priest, had taught him the horrors of war. It was, therefore, a shock to the aged servant of God when the present internecine strife broke out in Europe, and he prayed with his whole soul that the beloved country of his adoption might not be drawn into the gigantic struggle. Indeed, although they stood in the background of his active life, Father McKenna's staunch civic virtues were as a complement rounding out and perfecting a noble character. Possibly, the fruits of his example and principles in this respect were not the least of his extraordinary life.

CHAPTER XXII.

DIRECTOR OF THE ROSARY AND HOLY NAME SOCIETIES.

(1900–1906)

Not even the most conscientious biographer, believing ever so strongly in the rigidly chronological order, would now, we think, undertake to follow Father McKenna minutely in his travels. To have so sketched the celebrated missionary up to this point in his life, would have been most difficult; to do so from this time on were impossible. For many years in the past, as the reader has doubtless noticed, he rarely spent so much as a month in the same town or city. Beginning with this period, he does not often remain a full week at the same church; frequently, indeed, we find him dividing his time between two or more places within so brief a space.

Father McKenna was now to experience the truth of the Scriptural adage which tells us that "the obedient man shall speak of victory," as well as to realize the wisdom of the ancient proverb, "all things come to him who waits in patience." In September, 1900, he opened the missionary season with his accustomed zest. But little more than five weeks had passed, when his heart was rejoiced by the information that his earnest prayer had at last been heard and that he had been appointed by his provincial director of the Rosary Confraternity and Holy Name Society, with full permission to devote his boundless energy to their propa-

gation. To prepare the way for the more effectual furthering of these two apostolates which he could now claim as particularly his own, Father McKenna at once used the Catholic press to address the following letter of notification to the pastors of the country.

"Address to Pastors in Charge of Missions."

"*Rev. Dear Father:*—As you are aware, a great stimulus has in our day been given to 'The Salutary Devotion of the Rosary' by the earnest words of our Holy Father Leo XIII. He ranks it first among the devotions to the Blessed Mother of God, and builds on it all his hopes for the triumphs of the Church. Hence his great desire is to see this devotion more deeply and more tenderly cherished by all the faithful. With a view to this end, for several years he has renewed his efforts through his encyclicals to the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic world, urging greater devotion to the cherished Rosary. Permit me to quote from his encyclical of 1883.

"'Our need of divine help is not less to-day than when the great Dominic preached the Rosary as a remedy to heal the wounds of Christendom. Divinely enlightened, he saw that no remedy could be better adapted to the evils of his time than that men should by frequent meditation on the salvation obtained for us by Christ return to Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life," and that they should seek the help of God through His Virgin Mother, "to whom it is given to destroy all heresy." To effect this he so composed the Rosary as to recall to mind the mysteries of our salvation in their chronological order. He combined, as it were, and interlaced the subjects to be meditated upon with the Angelic Salutation and the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. We who seek a remedy for like evils, do not doubt that the prayer introduced by the most holy man with so much benefit to the Catholic world of his day will have the greatest power against the calamities of our times also.'

"The words of the Holy Father have a special significance for

the children of St. Dominic, to whom, as he says, this devotion belongs by a kind of right. In an audience granted to the Superior of our Order he said: 'As the promotion of this salutary work of piety among the faithful has been committed to the religious of your Order by your holy Founder, let them institute the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary everywhere, and propagate and cultivate it with zeal, that through their assiduous care the people may be enrolled in this holy militia in which the ensign is the banner of the Rosary.' In answer, then, to the desire and command of His Holiness, the Very Rev. Provincial of our province has assigned to me the pleasing task of erecting the Confraternity of the Rosary and of establishing the Living Rosary in all churches whose pastors may desire to have either of these devotions instituted. And it is my cherished hope that the remaining portion of my life may be spent in these apostolates.

"To facilitate the good work, as well as to lessen loss of time and travelling expenses, pastors who desire the establishment of the Confraternity of the Rosary, the Holy Name Society or the Living Rosary in their churches are requested to make their wishes known to me, so that I may visit them and establish any of the above confraternities in the churches of the same city or district at the same time. In case any of the above societies has already been canonically established in your parish, I shall be happy to assist you in increasing its membership. With much respect, I am yours in Christ.

"C. H. McKenna, O.P.,
"869 Lexington Avenue, New York City."

While Father McKenna had long been engaged in the propagation of the apostolates of the Rosary and the Holy Name, his appointment as their director general in all the country east of the Rocky Mountains may be said to mark a new era in his career. Although it came at an age in life when most men seek to rest from their labors, it prepared the way for fourteen

years more of extraordinarily fruitful labors. The great missionary was not less keenly interested in the cause of the Holy Name than in that of the Rosary. If he was more emphatic in announcing his appointment as moderator of the latter society, this was because the Rosary was then in greater favor with both people and clergy—owing, perhaps, to the earnest appeals of Leo XIII, whose many encyclicals in behalf of this devotion to the Mother of God not only aided its propagation, but caused him to be called the "Pope of the Rosary." Father McKenna took the greatest delight in these encyclical letters of Leo, and never failed to use them as a means of advancing the cause of the Rosary in the United States. Indeed, they were the subject of many of his most eloquent sermons and lectures. And with his keen spiritual discernment, he knew how to make devotion to the Rosary serve as a means of propagating the Holy Name Society, destined later to obtain so strong a hold on the Catholic men of America. This he did by preaching also the Holy Name wherever he was called to preach the Rosary.

The first church at which Father McKenna established his two cherished religious societies after their charge had been specially entrusted to him by his Order, was Saint Edward's, Philadelphia; the date of their establishment, October 21, 1900. For this reason and also because it marks a new era in the growth of the Rosary and the Holy Name confraternities in the United States, we reproduce the account of these services as given in the diocesan paper.

"At St. Edward's on last Sunday [says the *Catholic Standard and Times* of October 27, 1900] Rev. C. H. McKenna, O.P., the

well known missionary, erected the Confraternity of the Rosary and established a Holy Name Society. The exercises were of a beautiful and impressive character. Father McKenna addressed the congregation at all the Masses, except the first, and at the last Mass he preached a sermon. After this Mass the joyful mysteries of the Rosary were recited, Rev. M. J. Scully leading in the recital. At the erection of the Rosary Society in a parish the entire Rosary must be recited. The confraternity was erected in the afternoon, on which occasion the church was crowded. About 700 members, men, women and children, were enrolled. The sorrowful mysteries were then recited. The choir sang the '*Veni Creator.*' Father McKenna delivered a sermon on the devotion. The '*Salve Regina*' was then sung. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was given by Father Scully, and the exercises closed with the '*Te Deum.*' In the evening the men and boys of the parish to the number of five hundred and fifty joined the Holy Name Society. The exercises began with the five glorious mysteries of the Rosary. Father McKenna delivered a sermon on the 'Holy Name,' after which the society was organized. The choir sang '*Jesu Mi,*' and the services closed with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament by Father Scully."

Those who knew Father McKenna or ever heard him preach, may readily imagine the impression produced on the minds of the people by exercises such as those described by the *Catholic Standard and Times.* The editor of that paper is in error, however, when he states that the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary must be recited in church on the day of the confraternity's establishment in a new place. Yet this was generally done by the society's director both that the piety of a congregation might be quickened and that their prayers might bring greater blessings upon the new society. The scene at Saint Edward's was but a sample of hun-

dreds of others that followed one another in rapid succession through the nearly a decade and a half of active labor that remained to the holy friar. Indeed, no period of Father McKenna's life was more productive of good than that extending from 1900 to 1914—a fitting conclusion to a long apostolate that had been singularly fertile from its beginning.

As soon as he received this special appointment to propagate and guide the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society in Saint Joseph's Province, the humble religious wrote the Most Rev. Andrew Frühwirth, who was then the Order's Master General, to acquaint him of the fact and to ask any suggestions he might wish to make with regard to the propaganda of the sodalities. In reply the missionary received a letter from Rome, dated November 23, 1900, congratulating him on the honor that had been shown him and wishing him every success in his ministry.

The zealous priest's next step was to obtain from Cardinal Gibbons and other members of the hierarchy, whose dioceses had been the most frequent fields of his labors, a general permission to establish the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society for all pastors of their dioceses who should desire them. A little later he addressed the following letter for a similar liberty to such of our prelates as he had not previously approached.

"*Most Rev. dear Archbishop* [or Right Rev. dear Bishop]:—Some time ago I was appointed by my Provincial to secure Rosary and Holy Name diplomas for pastors who should desire one or both of these Confraternities established in their churches, and who had previously obtained the consent of the Ordinary. With a view to prevent delays and minimize trouble, I humbly beg you,

if it seems well, to grant to the pastors of your diocese who may desire it, a general permission for the establishment of those Confraternities such as has been granted by His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons, my own Archbishop, and by several of the Archbishops and Bishops of the country. I beg you also to dispense with the Clementine Decree forbidding more than one Confraternity of the same kind in the same city or town. By a Rescript of the Holy Father, dated May 20th, 1896, all Ordinaries have power to grant, over their signature, such a formal permission and dispensation. If, then, you will kindly do this, I shall feel at liberty, without further delay, to assure the pastors of your diocese that they have full authority for the erection of the above Confraternities.

"Your humble and obedient servant,

"C. H. McKenna, O.P.,

"Apostolate of the Rosary, 869 Lexington Avenue, New York City."

The promptness with which the hierarchy of the country responded to his letter and the readiness with which they endorsed his cause must have gladdened Father McKenna's heart. Few there were who did not reply to the holy man's appeal; nor was it long before these became enthusiastic supporters of his apostolate. Good Bishop Harkins annexed to his approbation the words: "Permission granted also to all priests subject to our authority to apply for faculties to attach Dominican indulgences to beads."

Among the first prelates to whom the missionary sent his letters of appeal for a general permission to establish the Rosary Confraternity and Holy Name Society were Archbishop Corrigan of New York and Bishop Wigger of Newark. From his earliest years in the episcopacy the archbishop had been a warm supporter of both societies. For this reason, we are at a

loss to understand why he omits the Holy Name Society in his approval, unless it was an oversight, or that under the influence of the diocesan union established in his metropolitan see some twenty years before, the society already existed in practically all the churches of his diocese. In all other respects his letter and that of Bishop Wigger are identical. Both prelates showed their confidence in the saintly Dominican and their hearty approval of his apostolate by empowering him to sign their names to all letters necessary for its prosecution in their dioceses.

Father McKenna's letter of appeal to the hierarchy and their earliest replies indicate that the Rosary still enjoyed a wider favor than the Holy Name. But under the influence and advocacy of the venerable Dominican, who was now free to devote his time to preaching its cause, coupled with the gradual realization by all of the power for good which it exercised over Catholic men, the Holy Name Society rapidly grew in numbers as well as in the esteem of the hierarchy, clergy and people. At first, the misionary had often to take advantage of his invitations to establish the Rosary Confraternity to preach the merits of the Holy Name Society. It was not long, however, before it was frequently necessary to reverse this method, and to use the Holy Name devotion as a means of furthering that of the Rosary. With impartial zeal he labored with all his might for the promotion of both societies to the end that he might win souls for heaven.

The more effectually to further interest in the great society for men, the missionary sought to second his apostolic preaching in its behalf by addresses to the public through the medium of the Catholic press. Be-

ginning with 1903 and continuing for some years, he issued annually a pamphlet on the merits and purpose of the Holy Name Society and the good accruing from it, which he sent broadcast to the pastors within the sphere of his activity. In this brochure he incorporated many of the letters he had received from the hierarchy and noted clergymen showing their approval of the confraternity, together with instructions on how to make it a success in a parish. This modest advertising Father McKenna always felt played an important part in the wonderful growth which now began to manifest itself in the society.

From among the many letters in praise of the Holy Name Society the new director received from the hierarchy about this time, we select two of which we often heard him speak as being the source of much consolation and encouragement in his work. The first, from the late saintly archbishop of Cincinnati, reads:

"St. Peter's Cathedral, Cincinnati, Ohio,
"July 17, 1904.

"*Rev. C. H. McKenna, O.P.*, New York City:

"Rev. dear Father McKenna:—God be praised for the institution and propagation of the Society of the Holy Name, and for the publication of the prayer book of the Holy Name. Both the society and the prayer book have been found a most serviceable means for correcting the shameful practice of using profane language, so offensive to God's honor and so degrading to men. I believe that every pastor who will take pains to establish the society will find it a great help in all his labors for sanctifying the souls under his care, particularly by helping men to frequent the Sacraments and attend at Holy Mass. I recommend it to all the Rev. Pastors in the diocese of Cincinnati.

"Your servant in Christ,
"William Henry Elder,
"*Archbishop of Cincinnati.*"

In the other communication, whose date we have been unable to find, the present distinguished ordinary of Wheeling thus tells the apostle what he thinks of the Holy Name Society:

"The Holy Name Society was established in the Cathedral, Wheeling, in the year 1897. Since that period it has steadily grown in numbers and in usefulness, being a power unto piety and edification throughout the congregation. It has brought pastor and flock into closer relations, stimulated the frequentation of the Sacraments, and tended much to the suppression of profanity and kindred vices. One of the most inspiring spectacles of the whole year is the gathering of the devout throng of some seven or eight hundred of the men of the parish, reciting the office, and at intervals lifting up their voices in sacred hymns. It is only exceeded by the crowds of men communicants who approach the Holy Table on the appointed days. I have no hesitation in writing that the establishment of the Holy Name Society has been a great blessing to the parish and to the individual souls of the members. May God bless your efforts in establishing such organizations as the crowning work of a life spent in the service of the Lord.

"Faithfully yours in Christ,

"P. J. DONOHUE,

"*Bishop of Wheeling.*"

Although the years from 1900 to 1906 were certainly among the most important in Father McKenna's life, we cannot attempt to give his labors at this time in detail. To do so would require almost a volume in itself. Suffice it to say that the wisdom of his appointment as director of the Rosary and the Holy Name societies soon became apparent. It was a work for which he had a special aptitude—a grace and a zeal that were heaven-given and heaven-blessed. With his selection to take charge of their propagation began the

phenomenal development of both confraternities—of that of the Holy Name in particular. Great as had been his labors on the missions for thirty years, they were not more single-hearted or richer in results than were his efforts in behalf of the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society at this period.

Father McKenna knew well the dramatic art and every artifice of oratory. Some considered that in vocal wealth he was the equal of Booth; that he possessed the dramatic power of McCullough and the elocutionary excellence of Murdock. But he ever preached as the pulpit orator, refusing to convert the church into the stage. Although he always spoke from the heart, he knew well how to keep his voice, as his emotions, under a master's control. This gave his delivery one of its principal charms—perfect naturalness. Possibly we have had no American preacher who possessed a more perfect command over the souls of his audience. While his language was generally simple and direct, at times his rolling periods reminded one of the old masters of English. Seldom did he seek to move his hearers to smiles, which he thought unworthy of the house of prayer, but often he drew tears even from the eyes of hardened men. At times, also, when carried away with the thought of the heinousness of sin against the Creator or of the blessedness of divine love, the holy man of God himself wept. But there was never a suggestion of the weak or sentimental in his tears; they were the genuine tears of a strong, virile man, than which nothing is more touching. All these talents the apostle of piety had devoted unsparingly to the salvation of souls during his long years on the missions. Now, as he had lost none of his

zeal and still retained his mental vigor and splendid voice, he gave them in the same spirit and measure to the apostolates of the Rosary and Holy Name.

In previous years, as has been said, Father McKenna's stay at any one church had been from one to four weeks, according to the length of his missions. During the present period, except when engaged in missionary work—as he frequently was—he rarely tarried more than a few days in the same locality. From place to place he went, establishing Rosary and Holy Name confraternities, giving triduums, delivering lectures or preaching on special occasions. So often had he to spend the night on the train that he grew to be as much at ease and could sleep as well on a moving Pullman car as in a quiet bed. It was due to his ability to rest on the train that he was able to travel so ceaselessly in the interests of his cherished societies. One of the greatest trials entailed by these endless journeys was the inconvenience to which he was often put to say his daily mass—a sacred duty that he would never omit, if it could possibly be fulfilled. No difficulty was too great for him to surmount that he might offer up the holy sacrifice to his Divine Master morning after morning. Thus, he would often interrupt his journey at a great sacrifice, or fast until ten or eleven o'clock, that in this way he might satisfy his devotion to his eucharistic Lord.

It would be useless to attempt to follow the zealous friar in his multitudinous travels during the interval between the fall of 1900 and March, 1906; or to name the churches in which he established the societies of the Rosary and the Holy Name; or to mention the places where he preached or conducted triduums to increase

interest in pre-existing confraternities and to enlarge their membership. He established the Holy Name Society in hundreds of places at this period, while such triduums took the part in his life formerly taken by the missions.

In addition to this vigorous apostolate, much lecturing, extra preaching and aid on the missions, Father McKenna never failed to keep up his spirit and practice of prayer and meditation. Without these, he felt there could be no personal sanctity—no fruit from his labors, however strenuous or persevering. To God alone he looked for success and blessings, which he believed came only in answer to prayer and humble petition. Besides, he continued to cultivate his life-long habit of study and reading, seeking to gather even at his advanced age new material for his work, to accumulate further knowledge, to keep his spirit young and abreast of the times. When not otherwise occupied, he was still sure to be found with book in hand. The Scriptures, religious literature and history still remained his favorite subjects. For the press other than the Catholic he had little love, but he glanced over the leading papers each day that he might keep informed on the topics that absorbed public attention.

Together with his brethren, Father McKenna had prepared the soil and sowed the good seed in previous years. Now he began to reap a rich harvest from his and their painstaking toils. The Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society had been established in many churches throughout the land at a prior date; but with his appointment as their director and under the magnetic influence of his burning zeal and untiring

apostolate, the two societies not only began to put on a new spiritual life, but to spring up in rapid succession in new places, to grow in membership, to multiply their potency for good in the American Church. This was particularly true of the Holy Name Society which then began to assume proportions among our Catholic men such as no other religious organization had ever been able to claim.

The holy priest made his home at Saint Vincent Ferrer's, New York, but so numerous were his engagements and calls that rarely was he to be found at his convent—scarcely ever on Sundays. Oftentimes his absence extended into weeks or even months. Albeit the earnest friar had passed the age of threescore and ten years before the close of the present period of his life, his appointment to the honorable position of director of the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society was, in a sense, the dawn of a new era for him. It was an era which, even though his other labors were forgotten, would crown his name with an imperishable halo of glory.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MODEL PRIEST AND MISSIONARY.

As Father McKenna devoted little time to the work of parochial missions after March, 1906, we have now arrived at a point in his biography where, it seems to us, a special word on his character as a model priest and missionary will not be out of place. Here again we shall be placed under the necessity of repeating things that have already been said; but again we have before us one of those excellent lessons taught by the holy man that cannot be too strongly insisted upon or too often related. For as by his deeds and virtues he gained glory during life and was praised in his day, so should his name go down in honor from generation to generation, and his memory, like that of the saints, be held in benediction for all time to come because of the good he wrought and the blessings he brought to the people through his ministrations.

From the time Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati extended consecrating hands over him, October 13, 1867, the young Friar Preacher keenly realized that he was an *alter Christus* (another Christ) bound to a life of holiness. To few priests is it given to appreciate, as did Father McKenna, the sacredness and the exalted character of the priesthood. But this was not all. The young Dominican recognized with full discerning vision that his vocation as a member of the Order of Saint Dominic was the active ministry of preaching the word of God—teaching the people "the way, the

truth and the life"; that he was consecrated to the salvation of men; that his calling demanded that he should be a divine messenger bearing to men the gifts of heaven and the blessings of the Church. And these ministrations he gladly accepted—nay, treasured—not only because they were angelic, but also because they both bound him in closer union with Christ and enabled him to do more for souls. Furthermore, he felt that the sphere in which God had chosen him to labor was the American missions.

For these reasons, from the day of his ordination Father McKenna set himself to copy the life of the Divine Master in his own—sought to acquire all those virtues which should adorn the priesthood. These were the thoughts that ever held mastery over his mind and controlled his every action. Never did he forget that he was a priest of God or lose sight of the dignity of his station and the sanctity to which it obligated him. So, too, from the time he completed his studies he gave every spare moment to preparation for preaching and the work of a missionary. It was a preparation that ended not until the infirmities of old age obliged the man of God to desist from his apostolic labors. Nor was it limited to his sermons; it included everything necessary to make him a true guide to men and a skilful physician to souls.

It was these unremitting efforts to become a true priest of God and a successful gleaner of souls through the missions that made Father McKenna the model priest and missionary whom all loved and admired, and worthy of the following tributes from distinguished churchmen.

Cardinal Gibbons, who has more than once spoken

of Father McKenna as one of the greatest missionaries ever produced by the United States, writes:

"Father McKenna, the Dominican, has long been widely known and deeply revered as a saintly priest and eloquent preacher. Perhaps never before him did any priest in the United States do more for God by moulding the hearts of both people and priests. In aspect, one fancied he stood before a father of the desert of old: in discretion, one could believe him indeed a blood-relation of his profound fellow-religious—St. Thomas of Aquin: in earnestness he was a Lacordaire or a Savonarola; yet in all these *sui generis*, of his own times, and with a potent influence all his own. From the altar or the pulpit his face and eyes were as those of Moses coming down from the mount—aglow with meditated truth and a message to men bursting from his soul. A very holy man, a man of keen and constant mortification, of overflowing love for his fellowman in their soul-needs, of tireless thought and prayer, Father McKenna was and will long be a model for the Order of Preachers, for our American priests generally, for preachers in this country and others."[1]

Cardinal O'Connell, whose ecclesiastical province was one of Father McKenna's most fruitful fields of labor, writes:

"Archbishop's House, Granby Street, Boston,
"March 28, 1917.

"*Dear Father:*

"I remember well the first time I met Father McKenna. It was in 1888 at St. Joseph's Church in the west end of Boston when I was a young curate. The Dominican Fathers were giving a mission to our people, and the wonderful zeal and eloquence of Father McKenna were the dominating spirit of the whole parish at the time. I frequently stood in the rear of the church lost amid the crowd of intent listeners who seemed to hang upon

[1] Letter of February 20, 1917.

his words, and who were swayed by the fiery torrent of sublime religious sentiments which seemed to flow straight from the pure and consecrated heart of the holy man. As a preacher of the Word of God he had undoubtedly the highest qualifications—holiness of life and eloquence of speech.

"At home in the rectory he was simplicity itself. At table he was very agreeable, but nevertheless even then he seemed detached, recollected and amiably serious. He was a complete stranger to me, but before the mission was finished I had learned to revere and admire him both as priest and man. And as the years went by bringing us together in various relationships, that reverence and admiration constantly increased. He was a true son of Saint Dominic, aflame with the sacred fire of the love of souls. God alone knows to how many hundreds of thousands his eloquent word and his holy example brought sanctification and salvation.

"Sincerely yours in Xt.

"W. CARDINAL O'CONNELL,

"*Archbishop of Boston.*"

The next two letters are from two of America's oldest and best beloved missionaries—Father Walter Elliott, the Paulist, and Father Robert (McNamara), the Passionist. Both often came into contact, direct or indirect, with Father McKenna, and everywhere they were rejoiced and edified by the odor of zeal, sanctity and good report he left behind him. Father Elliott, March 14, 1917, thus writes of the distinguished Dominican:

"Of those who rule men's souls with the iron rod of penance it is allotted to but few never to lose mastery over them. Father McKenna was one of this superior kind of missionaries. I rarely met him personally, for active missionaries do not often meet; but we constantly cross one another's tracks. And from both priests and people we heard spontaneous praise

of his remarkable sway over the hearts of wicked men and women. In my experience he was the topic of conversation on many occasions, and always a subject of admiration for his victories—the dearest of all achievements to a missionary's ambition—over the hard-hearted, totally abandoned, reckless and shameless sinners. We thus heard of him from both priests and people, the one class under whose eyes he labored, the other to whose hearts he spoke.

"This was the result of his preaching rather than of his hearing confessions, though he was an excellent father confessor, and was the very kind of a priest whom a well nigh hopeless wretch would select for his sacramental confidant, testing him mentally as he sat under the spell of his gentle imperiousness in the pulpit. All preachers know the difficulty of preaching God's justice without lesion to His adorable mercy. Father McKenna's privilege it was to succeed perfectly in this; his tone and manner and personality were truly the gift of the Redeemer he loved so well, and who pictured the day of doom with His eyes yet dimmed with the tears He shed over the apostate city of Jerusalem. Father McKenna himself felt the terrors of the divine wrath sensibly and manifestly whilst he launched death, judgment and hell upon the souls of sinners. And when he preached God's mercy for sinners and His Son's crucifixion for them, his benignant form and his kindly voice were the medium of communicating a sweet exhaustless plenty of confidence in the divine pardon.

"All preachers, missionaries especially, know that the make-up of moral discourses is easily secured by assorting portions of the great traditional store of precept and illustration; the matter of every mission sermon may be called common property. But the manner of preaching it is one's own, and to make it in the right manner is of far greater difficulty and immensely greater importance than the selection and arrangement of the matter. The imperishable remembrance of a sermon is due to the overpowering religious attractiveness of the preacher's own self. This attractiveness Father McKenna possessed in a very high degree. Doubtless this was a gift of his gentle nature, to begin with, for even in ordinary conversation, whilst he was the reverse

of an intrusive talker, he yet won by his kindliness the quickest attention and ready agreement. But it was the missionary grace, it was the vocational endowment of God appropriate to his state of life—due also to his deep-hearted piety—that gave him his mighty persuasiveness in addressing sinners. I have felt that it is worthy of the term I have already given it—gentle imperiousness."

Father Robert, whose long and intimate friendship with the noted Dominican gives his words additional value, wrote shortly before the friar's death:

"I am glad to hear that you are well. Yes, indeed, I have known dear Father McKenna for many years. Both of us have been on 'the firing line' longer perhaps than any other missionaries in the United States. We often met in the same city giving missions. More frequently, however, I followed in the footsteps of the 'grand old man,' and always with pleasure, knowing that his missionary piety and zeal prepared the way for my apostolic labors. In all my travels, and during my stay with priests or people, the name of Father McKenna, O.P., has always been spoken with the greatest respect, and the memory of his apostolic labors recalled with veneration. He was loved especially for his honest ways and child-like simplicity; but above all for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and his zeal for the 'Holy Rosary' of our Blessed Virgin Mother. He has done a great and grand work in his day. His beautiful example may encourage others to walk in his footsteps, as a saintly missionary and a true son of St. Dominic. God grant it may be thus."[2]

The somewhat lengthy appreciation which we now append from the pen of a distinguished jurist and exemplary Catholic, Judge Morgan J. O'Brien of New York, presents a picture, not less faithful than beautiful, of the missionary as a true priest, a man of God,

[2] February 18, 1917.

a zealous apostle, an eloquent orator and a friend both trustful and abiding.

"The name of Father Charles H. McKenna must, indeed, be ever glorious and his memory blessed. For fifty years he was enlisted in God's service, and no priest in his age and generation did more to promote His glory. Loving His Sacred Name with a passion that absorbed him, believing with a living faith that aught asked in that Name would be granted, his soul was filled with anguish at the thought of the ungrateful men who would sacrilegiously profane it. Never content except when preaching earnestly and eloquently about His Love and Mercy for man, in the thought of Him he lived and breathed and had his being. Imbued with these thoughts and sentiments, he worked earnestly and incessantly to promote a love and veneration for the Saviour of Mankind, and justly deserved the title of 'Father of the Holy Name Society.' He did not, however, limit his life-work, because with equal fervor he venerated our Blessed Mother and continually spoke her praises, and in the spread of the devotion of the Rosary he had an employment that was near and dear to him. Well, therefore, might he also be referred to as the 'Apostle of the Rosary.' Who that ever heard him can forget the great, towering figure, the ascetic yet strong face denoting piety and vigor, the well modulated voice and the direct and forceful manner in which he delivered God's message to man? Full of charity, nothing could be more effective than his appeals for the poor. The poor, the unfortunate, in him found a sympathetic friend and counsellor. Most charitable and considerate for others, he was most severe and rigid with himself. The comfort and the pleasure which he thought others should enjoy, he denied himself.

"With a fine mind, a strong will, and a heart filled with generous emotions, these were all consecrated to religion and humanity. But among his many distinguishing traits and titles, the one by which he will longest be remembered will be the fame and renown he secured and won as the greatest missionary preacher of his time. As a pulpit orator he had more force and mag-

netism than any preacher I ever knew or heard, and by many discriminating judges he was pronounced the greatest missionary that the Church in this country has produced. All the virtues that he had cultivated through life and that went to make up his splendid characer were present in his preaching. His piety, his earnestness, his self-denial and his devotion to duty were impressed upon all who heard him. The success of his appeal to men is demonstrated by his work in organizing the nation-wide movement of the Holy Name Society. To listen to his sermons addressed to gatherings where thousands were assembled was a rare privilege, and, when enjoyed, not easily forgotten.

"Those of us who remember Father Tom Burke, the Dominican Irish friar, whose matchless eloquence focussed the attention of the world on the justice of the claims of Ireland and advanced so powerfully the interests of religion, are inclined to associate him with Father McKenna. There is little in common between these two great Dominicans beyond their claiming Ireland as their birthplace, and their brotherhood in the Order of Preachers, except that each in his own style as an orator was masterful. In associating them, I am not thinking of comparisons, nor of holding them up for inspection as different types, but rather with the thought of succession. In his day, and indeed for a generation following, the name of Father Tom Burke was a household word in the Catholic homes of the United States. Father McKenna fell heir to his preacher's mantle. For more than two score years Father McKenna filled important pulpits in the Catholic churches in this country with the greatest credit to his Order and immeasurable benefit to his hearers and to the Church. In this extraordinarily long and useful career as a preacher, Father McKenna gave an unrivalled test of endurance in the arduous work of the missions and in the crusade he carried on for the honor of the Holy Name. We of the laity who heard him in the days of his greatest power, appreciate his matchless force. His very appearance marked him as one who would espouse no cause but the holiest, and in his case there was no deception in appearances. Nature endowed him with all of the orator's gifts, and they were enhanced by holiness and sim-

plicity. His earnestness, his determination to give the best that was in him and all he possessed to the cause of God and against the forces of sin—these were dominant motives in his life. He was ever in the pulpit the dignified priest, whether he entreated his hearers to profit by the mercy of God—a thought and subject dear to him—or condemned in language, with a force that was crushing, the sins of men. He always, however, filled the repentant sinner with the inspiration of hope and courage.

"I will not attempt to say more than a passing word about the friendship of this holy and noble priest which it was my privilege to enjoy. Intimacy and years but increased admiration. His devotion and attention to friends seemed almost incredible in an apostolic priest of his activity. In his relations with laymen his manner was warm and intimate, and familiarity with him but increased appreciation and admiration of his simple character and prayerful spirit. I knew him for more than thirty years, and valued his friendship as highly as I admired his wonderful traits of character and gifts of mind. . . ."[3]

To these encomiums, if time and space permitted, might be added innumerable others that have appeared in our Catholic journals during the last forty and more years. Indeed, a goodly volume might thus be compiled; for of few, if any, American clergymen has the press spoken so frequently or so eulogistically. Suffice it, therefore, to say that during the thirty years from 1870 to 1900 Father McKenna was almost constantly engaged on the missions; and from 1900 to 1906 we often find him, though not so regularly, giving the best that was in him to this apostolic ministry. How many the missions he gave in all those years there is now no way of knowing. More than once during the last decade of his life we asked him if he knew the number. The invariable answer was that he could not remember the precise number, but that he thought he

[3] Letter of April 9, 1917.

had taken part in some seven hundred. Possibly, indeed, no American missionary has ever had more to his credit. These missions, however, do not include the many triduums and retreats of various kinds that he gave in different parts of the country.

It would be impossible to overestimate the blessings that accrued to the Church of America from these apostolic labors. How the great missioner could touch the souls of all may be judged from the fact that pastors and the parochial clergy often found themselves almost unconsciously making the mission which they had engaged Father McKenna to give to their parishes, for they were convinced that they could not make a better retreat than by following the spiritual exercises he was giving to their people.

But the blessings that came to the Church of the United States from the friar's priesthood were not confined to his work as a missionary, preacher and lecturer, or to his efforts in behalf of the Holy Name Society, the Rosary Confraternity and other religious devotions. The influence of his very life and personal character was incalculable. We shall, however, speak only of the influence he exercised upon the clergy. Young priests in particular—for whom he had a special love and in whom he took a keen interest—profited by his example. Many of our most representative clergymen of today frankly acknowledge that they owe their lofty ideals of the priesthood to contact with Father McKenna in the early days of their ministry. But while the older clergy, already formed and settled in their habits, were naturally less affected by him than their younger confrères, they were not less edified. All regarded him as a model of every priestly virtue and an ideal missionary.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND.

(1906)

In the sixteenth century there lived in Mexico, then known as New Spain, a saintly Dominican missionary, Fray Domingo de Betanzos—one of the most lovable of the many splendid ecclesiastical characters in Spanish-American history. Betanzos was the father and founder of his Order in Mexico, where his name is inseparably linked with the history of both Church and State. Borne down by his years, as well as worn out by his apostolic labors, the humble friar conceived the pious idea of going to the Holy Land to end his days amidst the scenes of the life and death of his Divine Master. It was in 1549 that the aged priest, with the permission of his Father General, and to the regret of all Mexico, started on his long journey, "carrying away with him the hearts of all men." God, however, had decreed that he should not realize his holy design. After reaching his native Spain he fell sick and died in the odor of sanctity in the Dominican monastery of Saint Paul, Valladolid, before the close of the same year.

Father McKenna, although he lived in a less heroic age and had fewer privations to bear, had much in common with the venerable Fray Domingo de Betanzos, with whose life he was well acquainted. Like Fray Domingo, Father McKenna also had long and ardently desired to see the Holy Land. But there

was this difference between the Spanish friar and his American brother, that while the former yearned to end his earthly pilgrimage in that portion of the world sanctified by the actual presence of the Redeemer, the latter had two ends in view—to satisfy his personal devotion and to draw renewed inspiration even in his old age from those hallowed places for the furtherance of his work of saving souls.

Although Father McKenna had longed for many years to make this holy pilgrimage, he had entertained little hope of ever satisfying his desire. Early in 1906, however, one of his friends, the late John F. Doyle of New York, invited the venerable missionary to accompany him on a tour to the Holy Land. This was a delightful surprise to Father McKenna. Believing that he would never again have so favorable an opportunity of realizing his lifelong wish, especially now that old age had begun to make serious inroads upon his strength, he at once laid the matter before his provincial. The required permission being gladly granted as a slight recognition of his long and faithful services, Father McKenna without delay set about the preparations for his pilgrimage, which to him seemed like a journey to heaven. The first step to be taken was one that demanded the utmost tact: that is, to obtain the consent of pastors for the cancelling of many engagements. Although he succeeded in arranging this delicate matter with little trouble, he kept steadily at his work almost up to the very day of his departure. And in the meantime a third person had been added to the party—the Rev. Bernard A. McKenna, whose diary we follow in describing the missionary's pilgrimage.

It was in the afternoon of Friday, March 9, 1906,

that the three pilgrims sailed from New York on the British steamship "Republic." Like Fray de Betanzos, Father McKenna carried with him the love and good wishes of all. The voyage was uneventful. For the sake of his health the venerable missionary spent much of the time on deck, where he meditated, read—principally about the places he was to visit—or walked, joining in an occasional game of quoits or shuffle-board with his two companions or other passengers. Following the habits of regularity he had always practiced, he retired at 9:30 or 10 P. M. But before going to bed the pilgrims never failed to assemble in Father McKenna's state-room to recite his favorite prayer to the Blessed Virgin—the Rosary.

They arrived at Ponta Delgada, Saint Michael—one of the islands of the Azores—on the evening of March 15. Eager to visit his eucharistic Lord and to offer up the holy sacrifice, both of which he had been deprived of for nearly a week, Father McKenna was rejoiced to learn that the ship would not leave that port before noon the next day. The following morning he and his priestly companion rose early and started for the cathedral of Saint Sebastian. As he left the ship, he lost his footing and was prevented from falling from the tender by one of the crew. Undaunted by the mishap, however, he continued his way and said mass with his customary devotion.

March 17, Saint Patrick's Day, was given to innocent celebration in honor of Ireland's patron saint. Loyal and joyous in his piety, the missionary wore "the green" and joined in the mirth of the day with as keen an interest as the youngest passenger. Gibraltar, the next port, was reached on the morning of

March 19, the feast of Saint Joseph. There, too, Father McKenna hastened to the cathedral of Santa Maria la Coronata to pray before the altar and say mass in honor of the foster-father of our Lord. At the cathedral he met the saintly vicar apostolic of Gibraltar, the Right Rev. Remigio G. Barbieri, O.S.B., and the two holy men appeared to be instinctively drawn to each other. After brief stops at Algiers and Genoa, the pilgrims found themselves at Naples on the morning of March 25, the feast of the Annunciation. Hurrying to the cathedral of Saint Januarius, the two priests offered up the holy sacrifice and prayed before the noted relic of the saint's blood. The remainder of the day was given to touring the city. Among the places visited was the great Dominican church of San Domenico, where repose the remains of the Right Rev. Richard L. Concanen, O.P., the first bishop of New York, for whom the missionary had a deep reverence.[1] Here Father McKenna was warmly received by his brethren in religion to whom his piety and his fruitful labors in the cause of souls were well-known.

From the moment of embarkation Father McKenna enjoyed the voyage; but from this point, as all was new to him, his interest was greatly intensified. On board the ship the distinguished appearance, genial disposition and evident holiness of the venerable missionary won for him friends and admirers irrespective of religious belief. Among them were two ladies, descendants of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who, however, unlike their famous progenitor, were not Catho-

1 For the life of this distinguished churchman see the writer's articles on the Right Rev. Richard L. Concanen in *The Catholic Historical Review*, January (pages 400 ff.) and April (pages 19 ff.), 1916.

lics. Whenever it was known that Father McKenna was to say mass at any port, whether on the outgoing or the return voyage, even the non-Catholic passengers would go ashore to assist at the holy sacrifice. During the ship's stay in Genoa, some of his fellow passengers gave a dinner in his honor at one of the leading hotels of the city.

Alexandria, which was the next break in the journey, was reached on March 28. As the vessel was to remain in the historic Egyptian city until the next day, the three travellers were soon ashore. Father McKenna was greatly diverted by the noisy, motley crowd that came to meet the boat. Until then he had contended that Naples had no equal in that respect, but he was forced to admit, after seeing Alexandria, that the picturesque Italian city could at best claim but a second place. The afternoon of March 28 and the morning of the following day were spent in visiting the various points of interest in the ancient city, including the monastery of the Franciscan Fathers, where the two priests had an opportunity to say mass.

The journey thence to Cairo, where the pilgrims spent nearly three days, was made by train. After saying mass each morning in the Franciscan church there, the remainder of the time was spent visiting the great Pyramids, the famed Sphinx of Gheezeh, and the places associated by tradition with Moses and the Holy Family during the sojourn in Egypt. As was but natural with one of his deeply religious temperament, these sacred places made a strong impression on Father McKenna. From Cairo he wrote, April 1, to his friend, Miss Eliza McCarthy of New York:

"I have sent you several postal cards which I hope you have

received. They all told you that I am well and happy and enjoying my pilgrimage very much. Thank God.—Yesterday we visited the little home where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived while they were in Egypt. How humble and poor it was! Today we start for Jerusalem and will arrive there tomorrow evening. I will write you again soon."

Both in Cairo and Alexandria the Franciscan Fathers, to whom Father McKenna was not unknown, not merely gave the pilgrims a cordial welcome, but volunteered to act as their guides—a kindness that deeply touched the pious friar's heart. Another subject that filled the Dominican's mind in his travels along northern Africa was the thought of the many members of his Order who in bygone days had so bravely suffered or even shed their blood for the faith in those countries.

From Cairo the travellers proceeded to Port Said, whence they sailed for Jaffa. But as they were unable to land at that port, they continued their way to Haifa. Arriving there late on Monday, April 3, they went immediately to the convent of the Carmelite Fathers on the summit of near-by Mount Carmel. It were hard to imagine, much less to describe, the emotions that filled the heart of Father McKenna when he caught his first glimpse of the Holy Land—and especially when he first set foot on the soil trodden by the feet of the Divine Saviour. The holy man's soul was so rapt in ecstasy that he was unable to speak. For him the landing at Haifa was the beginning of a season of spiritual joy which he never forgot. Then and there he would have been content to die. He recalled all that he had so often read and pondered over in Holy Scripture concerning the life, sufferings and death of Christ our

Lord. The thought of it made it impossible for him to sleep, tired as he was. The next morning the two priests said mass at an early hour in the Grotto of the Prophet Elias, that they might spend the day in visiting the School of Prophets, the traditional sojourn of the Holy Family on Mount Carmel and other places of pilgrimage.

On Wednesday the pilgrims started in procession for Nazareth, arriving there shortly after high noon. No place on earth is more certain to give rise to devout reflections and meditation in the earnest Christian soul than Nazareth, the home of the Holy Family. The reader who has followed this biography with care may picture to himself what must have been Father McKenna's emotion when gazing upon this sacred city. There he would fain have remained long. As he walked along the streets of the city, he thought of how often the same pathways had been trodden by Christ, His mother and His foster-father—Saint Joseph. The places that appealed most strongly and vividly to him were Mary's Well and the spot which tradition points out as that whereon stood the home of Christ—where "the Word was made flesh." Over this stands the Church of the Annunciation, and there the missionary had the happiness of saying mass the morning after his arrival. It was a privilege for which he never ceased to thank God from his heart.

The little party intended going to Mount Tabor, which they could see clearly in the distance; but because of the pressure of time they did violence to their hearts, and on their return to Haifa proceeded to Jaffa by boat instead of by land as they had originally proposed. It was Count le Grelle, a Belgian nobleman

whom they had met at Mount Carmel, who persuaded them to go with him by water—a fortunate circumstance, for some French pilgrims who took the other route were assailed and robbed by highwaymen. From Jaffa they went at once to Jerusalem where they arrived on the evening of April 6. The two priests were warmly welcomed by the Dominican Fathers of the celebrated Biblical University of Saint Stephen, Father McKenna's reputation having preceded him.

With Saint Stephen's as the centre of his activities for the next twelve days, Father McKenna began his round of visits to the holy places of Jerusalem and its vicinity. On the morning after his arrival he had the privilege of celebrating mass in the Chapel of the Flagellation which, according to tradition, stands on the site of the Praetorium, or house of Pilate, in which our Lord was scourged. Later in the same day he went on to Ain Kârim, so as to be able to offer up the holy sacrifice on Palm Sunday in the church of Saint John the Baptist, built, we are assured, over the spot once occupied by the home of Zacharias, where the Blessed Virgin on her visit to Saint Elizabeth gave voice to the sublime hymn *Magnificat*.[2] The three following mornings the venerable missionary performed the same sacred function in the Cave of Bethlehem, the Garden of Gethsemane and on Mount Calvary—places especially sanctified by their close association with the birth, agony and death of our Divine Lord.

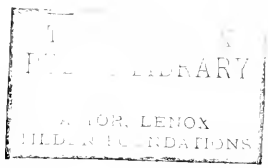
[2] In designating the places where Father McKenna said mass on Saturday and Sunday (April 7 and 8) we have followed his letter in preference to Father Bernard McKenna's diary. The missionary's letter was written in Jerusalem, while the part of the diary dealing with the tour from Cairo on was made up from postal cards some months after the pilgrims had returned to the United States.

It was a matter of deep regret to Father McKenna that, because of Holy Week, he was unable to celebrate mass on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. He was partly compensated for this, however, by being able to take part in the solemn services at Saint Stephen's and to continue his pilgrimages to the places most intimately connected with the Passion. At midnight on Holy Thursday he made the Way of the Cross along the *Via Dolorosa*—traversing the very streets over which the Divine Master passed bearing his cross. In the afternoon of Good Friday, together with many other devout pilgrims, he again performed this act of devotion. To the end of his life he continued to speak of these two occasions as having moved him to the depths of his soul.

On April 13—Good Friday—, he wrote the same devout friend, Miss McCarthy, with characteristic reserve:

"I have been in the Holy City nearly a week. We attended the Good Friday exercises in St. Stephen's Church which is attended by the Dominican Fathers. They have a beautiful convent attached to the church. The community is quite large and edifying. Father Bernard and I have now visited all the important places in and around Jerusalem. We leave here on the Wednesday after Easter on our return trip. So far I have enjoyed our visit more than words can tell. I will go home satisfied, and will thank God all the days of my life that I was permitted to make this visit.

"At 3 o'clock this afternoon we shall make the Stations of the Cross, travelling from the place where our Lord was condemned by Pilate to the hill of Calvary over the very ground over which He was led, carrying the Cross. How your heart would beat for love of our Blessed Lord, were you with us! We have said Mass at the place of the Angelic Salutation; where our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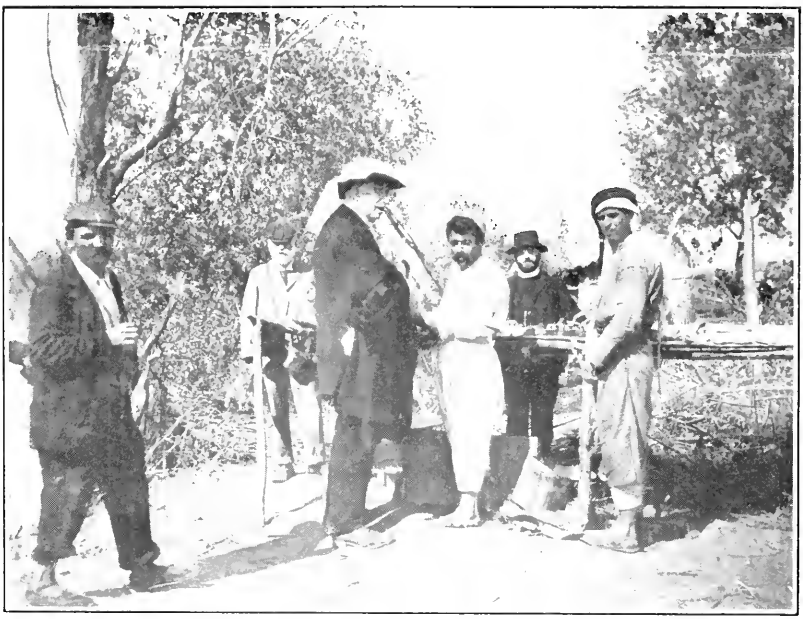


VERY REV. C. H. McKENNA IN THE HOLY LAND.

Blessed Lady visited Saint Elizabeth; in the cave where our Lord was born and at the places of His agony, scourging and crucifixion—also on Calvary. You can imagine our feelings when offering up the Holy Sacrifice in these holy places! We hope yet to say Mass over his Tomb and on Mount Olivet, whence He ascended into heaven.

"My health is excellent. I am surprised how well I have been able to travel from place to place. At all the holy spots you have been remembered in my Masses. . . ."

Easter Sunday he sang solemn mass in the presence of his brethren in the church of Saint Stephen, so named because it stands on the ground where the first Christian martyr was put to death. On this occasion the good priest had the happiness of having as deacon and subdeacon two students from his own province. It is worthy of note, indeed, that the singing of the solemn mass at Saint Stephen's on Easter Sunday was considered a special privilege of the eminent Biblical scholar, Father Joseph Lagrange—a privilege which he had never been known to cede to any one. But he held the American missionary in such esteem that of his own accord he requested him to officiate in his stead.

The places mentioned in the diary as having been visited these days are: the Tombs of the Prophets; the Garden of Gethsemane; the walls of old Jerusalem; the Church of the Immaculate Conception; points of interest along the *Via Dolorosa* or the Way of the Cross; Bethlehem, including the Grotto of the Nativity and the Tomb of Rachel; the Plain of Stephen; the old Basilica of Constantine; the "Garden Enclosed"; the traditional home of Zacharias and Saint Elizabeth—the parents of John the Baptist; Mount

Olivet; Mount Calvary; the Place of the Wailing of the Jews; the Tomb of Absalom and that of the Prophet Zacharias; the Valley of Jehosaphat; the Coenaculum, where tradition says the Last Supper was held, but which is now a Turkish mosque; the two places of our Lord's imprisonment; the new Church of Saint Mary, given to the Benedictines by the German Emperor; Emmaus; the convent of the Sisters of Rèparatrice; the Mosque of Omar, situated on the site of the Temple of David.

Those who knew Father McKenna intimately can realize what an inundation of spiritual delights must have accompanied these visits to the most hallowed spots in Christendom; how he must have revelled in holy thoughts and desires. It was just such a spiritual banquet as that to which old Padre Domingo de Betanzos had anxiously looked forward, but had not lived to enjoy. To the end of his life Father McKenna rejoiced that he had had the good fortune to be in Jerusalem during Holy Week and that he had been able to take part in the symbolic re-enactment of the last sad events of the Saviour's life on earth in the very place where they had occurred.

On Easter Monday, though much fatigued, the aged missionary rose at an early hour to say mass on that part of Mount Olivet to which tradition points as the place of Christ's ascension into heaven. Later in the day he journeyed on to Jericho and looked upon the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Tuesday, after mass in Jericho, he returned to Saint Stephen's, and on the following day offered up the holy sacrifice at the tomb of our Lord in the Franciscan Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Father McKenna's pilgrimage to the

Holy Land came to an end with this last visit to the Holy Sepulcher. His devotion, however, was not satisfied. Indeed, it cost him a struggle to depart from a place that, always dear to his heart, had now strengthened its hold on his affections by personal association.

From Jerusalem the travellers proceeded to Beyrout; and from there Father McKenna wrote Miss McCarthy, April 20: "Here I am at Beyrout, with my good friends, feeling hearty, healthy and well. I thank God for His goodness to me. We left Jerusalem two days ago on our homeward journey. We enjoyed our visit to the Holy Land more than words can express. How favored we were to be in Jerusalem in Holy Week!" The pilgrims reached Constantinople on April 25, and were cordially received by the Dominican Fathers. They had intended to spend some days in the capital of Constantine, but the war-clouds that were then gathering over the Balkan States and Turkey made it unsafe. So they remained only long enough to get a casual view of the city. From Constantinople they went on to Athens, taking the boat there for Naples.

It was on May 4 that Father McKenna arrived at the historic Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino, where he was privileged to say mass over the relics of the "Father of Monasticism in the West"—Saint Benedict. Here, too, he was edified by the holy lives of the Benedictines, and saw for the first time the handwriting of the great Saint Thomas of Aquin.

Two days after his arrival at Rome, Father McKenna wrote an intimate friend:

"I cannot understand how I failed to write to you. I was

sure I had done so long ago. I was glad to learn from your letter that you are well. My own health, thank God, is very good; and I am enjoying my trip very much. I have seen what I have long desired to see—the places consecrated by the life and sufferings of our Blessed Lord. I had hardly hoped for such a blessing, but God thought it well to grant it to me. You were not forgotten in the Holy Land. . . . The Holy Land is the land of the soul. There one realizes what faith and religion are. We were in Jerusalem during Holy Week, and took part in the 'Way of the Cross' through the streets on Good Friday. At each station a sermon was delivered. On Calvary an image of our Lord was taken down from the Cross and carried to the tomb. . . . You will be remembered at Lourdes, where Father Bernard and myself will make a week's retreat.

"Ever affectionately your old friend,

"C. H. McKenna, O.P.—God bless you."[3]

At Rome Mr. Doyle, who wished to go to cities they did not care to see, parted from his clerical friends and met them only occasionally from that time until they reached Queenstown. The two priests, however, tarried in the Eternal City for nearly three weeks. For Father McKenna, as on his first visit there, each day was a spiritual feast. Few were the shrines or holy places in Rome at which he did not pray on this occasion for he felt that he would never have another opportunity of satisfying his devotion among scenes so hallowed by Christian associations.

During this visit to Rome evidences were not wanting of the esteem in which the great missionary was held not merely by the authorities of his own Order, but by many other church dignitaries. Among those who showed him special honor we may single out the two Cardinals Vanutelli, the present Cardinal Früh-

[3] Letter of May 7, 1906, to P. F. McDonnell of New York.

wirth, O.P., Most Rev. Hyacinth Cormier—then Master General of the Dominicans—, Most Rev. Thomas Esser, secretary of the Index, and Most Rev. Albert Lepidi, master of the Sacred Palace. The present Archbishop Kennedy, rector of the American College, insisted that Father McKenna should address the clerical students under his charge on the ideals of the priesthood.

Again, at the celebration of the golden jubilee of Father Cormier's ordination—May 17, the distinguished American friar received almost as much attention as the saintly jubilarian. On May 13, Father McKenna was received in special audience by Pius X who showed much interest in his life's work, and urged him to continue his fruitful labors. And again, May 18, when Pope Pius gave an audience to Father Cormier and the representatives of the Order who had come from various countries to be present at the sacerdotal jubilee of their General, the Pontiff insisted that the two venerable priests, Fathers Cormier and McKenna, should kneel side by side before him to receive a special papal blessing.[4]

An event that gave Father McKenna keen joy on this visit to the Eternal City was the beatification of eight members of his Order who had received the crown of martyrdom in China. Of this he writes, May 20, to Miss McCarthy:

"This has been a great week for Dominicans, who came from all parts of the world to celebrate the jubilee of our saintly Master General. But this was not all. Today eight of our

[4] The writer represented his own province and that of California at Father Cormier's celebration, and was thus an eyewitness of the veneration shown Father McKenna at Rome.

holy martyrs were beatified. Oh, what a glorious sight to see Saint Peter's illuminated and all the nobility and clergy of Rome filling the grand edifice for the beatification! I send you a little picture of the new blessed."

On leaving Rome, May 24, the venerable missionary made a tour through parts of Italy. The diary of the journey shows that nearly all the places to which he went possessed relics of some member of his Order or some other saint for whom he had a special veneration. It is needless to say that he paid a visit to the tomb of Saint Charles Borromeo. But from this time the holy man suited himself to the wishes of his companion, who was making his first visit to continental Europe.

After his tour of Italy there was but one other sanctuary of religion in Europe which Father McKenna especially desired to see. This was Lourdes, a place which the reader knows was dear to his heart. Accordingly, he sailed from Genoa for Marseilles June 8, stopping in the latter place only long enough to offer up the holy sacrifice and to visit the city's magnificent cathedral. At Toulouse, the next break of the journey, he remained over night to say mass for the last time over the relics of Saint Thomas of Aquin.

Arriving at Lourdes on the evening of Sunday, June 10, the aged priest's soul was rejoiced at the sight of his beloved statue of the Virgin in the grotto which nature has chiselled in the rock Massabielle. That he might the more fully gratify his devotion, he at once began a week's retreat in honor of the Blessed Virgin. To say that this was a time of spiritual joy for the missionary but imperfectly expresses his state of mind. Morning after morning he arose at an early

hour to say mass at the grotto of Mary, after which he remained to pour out his soul in prayer. Not satisfied with this, he made frequent visits there each day.

From Lourdes he wrote again (June 17) to Miss McCarthy:

"I write to let you know that Father Bernard and I are both well and enjoying our little pilgrimage to Lourdes very much. Blessed be God for His goodness. We have been much edified by all we have seen here. The faith of the people who come to this holy place is wonderful. Day and night you may see them praying at the grotto. Often they sing hymns in honor of the Blessed Mother. We have witnessed many touching scenes—young men taking care of an aged father or mother who is paralyzed; mothers with their afflicted children, etc. In a pilgrimage of five thousand there were three hundred sick or disabled. One was a young priest totally blind who was brought here by his mother. Two miracles occurred the day before yesterday. The Blessed Mother is doing wonders here at Lourdes. . . . Yesterday I was speaking to a gentleman who, with beads in hand, was visiting the grotto. I found him to be an Englishman. He was, I saw, much agitated. Finally he told me that he was a Protestant clergyman, and that his wife and children were that very day baptized and received into the Church. He said that he was glad that they had entered the Church, but that he was himself hesitating. I encouraged him, and promised both to pray for him myself and to get others to do so. The promise seemed to please him. Won't you pray that he may see the light? . . ."

And on the same day he says in a letter to P. F. McDonnell:

"You are daily remembered in my Mass, wherever I am. May our Blessed Lord ever keep you in His loving care. Well, my son, it is impossible for me in this letter to give you an idea of all I have seen and felt since I left New York. The sights

and scenes of the Holy Land cannot well be described; but, with God's help, we shall some day talk my trip over together. Here I have been in Lourdes one week today. I am very fond of this holy place. There is an air of sanctity here which you cannot find elsewhere. There was an immense pilgrimage here last week from the city of Lyons, and several miracles occurred. It is wonderful to see the faith of the people. Yesterday a splendid young man spoke to me. He told me was a minister of the Church of England; that that morning his wife and children had been baptized by the bishop of the diocese who is now in Lourdes; that he was glad of her conversion and was praying God to get the faith also. Pray for him."

When the two priests had finished their retreat at Lourdes, they travelled leisurely through France and Belgium, on to the country of the Rhine and into England. But the American missioner's tour abroad—at least until he began his homeward journey from Lourdes—was essentially a pilgrimage of devotion. Yet, as has been said, he never suffered his piety to blunt his sense of humor or his keen love of the beautiful and the aesthetic. Thus in these travels, as in those of former years, he knew how to combine pleasure with religious devotion. To the latter, however, he rightly gave the first place. For this reason, as his physical strength was not equal to his mental alertness, he had at times to permit his younger companion to go alone to the art galleries, public buildings or other points of secular interest. But when a visit was to be made to a place sacred to religion, Father McKenna was sure to be ready for any exertion or sacrifice.

It was on July 7, 1906, that the great missionary arrived in Dublin. Despite his years, his love of his native land and kindred had not grown less. Thus, feeling that he would not again have the happiness of vis-

iting Ireland or his relations who still lived there, Father McKenna could not resist the impulse to see as much of both as his time and strength permitted. The four weeks he spent in Ireland were therefore a time given to much travelling. Our diary shows that the aged friar journeyed through nearly all the island and visited nearly all the convents of the Dominican Fathers. But Maghera and Dublin, where many of his people now lived, seem to have demanded his principal attention. From Maghera as a center he visited Fallalea and through southeastern Derry. From Dublin we find him going on several occasions to Tallaght to say mass over the body of his saintly friend, Father Tom Burke. The last place Father McKenna visited in the Emerald Isle was Cork, where his Irish brethren had invited him to be their guest of honor for August 4, the feast of Saint Dominic.

Those who saw Father McKenna at this time not only felt that he had unduly taxed his strength by excessive travelling, but feared lest the result might be serious. At Cork he was too fatigued to enjoy even the celebration in honor of his Order's founder. Yet he went on to Queenstown that same evening and rose before four o'clock the next morning to say mass before sailing on the staunch ship "Campania" for New York. The rest which he was able to take aboard the "Campania," together with his strong constitution, brought about a rapid recovery of the good priest, and by the time of his arrival in New York, Saturday, August 11, he was completely restored.

Of Father McKenna's previous journeys abroad we have only the most meager and incomplete accounts; but of this one, which he always considered the greatest

privilege granted him by his province, we possess, thanks to his companion, a rather full diary. Another reason for following the great friar in this pilgrimage and tour with such minuteness of detail was that, to the mind of the writer, they place in clear light the striking combination of the spiritual and the natural, of deep piety and natural goodness, for which he was noted. Indeed, these qualities united with the holy man's consuming zeal and broad charity to give him that charming character which enabled him to wield so extraordinary an influence over others.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY AND THE ROSARY CONFRATERNITY.

(1906–1911)

THERE were those who thought that Father McKenna might now seek some repose from his apostolic labors. But it was not so. For, possibly remembering the command of Leo XIII to die in the harness, as well as the words of encouragement he had so lately received from Pius X—certainly urged on by the impulse of the inspiration he had drawn from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land—, the missionary abated not an iota in his zeal to save souls.

A few days after his return to America we find him, at the request of Archbishop Farley, the future Cardinal of New York, giving a course of conferences to the Dominican Sisters at Sparkill, in that diocese, and immediately following, a retreat to the sisters of the same order at Blauvelt. These spiritual exercises, indeed, were but the beginning of a renewed apostolate that, advanced as he was in age, was to continue for more than eight years—years that were, in a sense, a period of even more extraordinary activity than that which had characterized his previous priestly life. Father McKenna's labors during this time were so severe and unremitting that many felt that he must have drawn strength from on high. In fact, at a time of life when the majority of men have long since lost their grasp on the public mind and have passed

into oblivion, the Dominican friar seemed to grow in esteem and popularity before the world, and to wield even a stronger influence for the good of religion—especially among men.

Many reasons may be assigned for this uncommon phenomenon. Among them not the least was the blessing of heaven. For the grand old man assiduously continued his habits of prayer and meditation, of humility and mortification, not merely that he might increase in personal sanctity, but that the fruit of his toil might be the salvation of others. God could hardly fail to reward such noble efforts even in this life. But to this spiritual reason for the good priest's growth in the affections of the people at an age when men are usually forgotten, must be added others in the natural order. Such, for instance, were his continued habits of reading and study, his keen interest in all things that made for good, which not only kept him young in mind and spirit, abreast of the times and in sympathy with the world, but preserved his mental vigor and alertness. For, as there is nothing more pitiful than the decrepitude and dotage of a man who has been a tower of strength and influence, so is there nothing that delights us more than the spectacle of old age still retaining the mental robustness of youth, still continuing to be eminently useful, still embracing the world with Christ-like affection. Pre-eminently such an old man was the Rev. Charles H. McKenna during the last decade of his life.

From the time the missionary returned from his pilgrimage to Palestine, his superiors, wishing to prolong the days of his usefulness and fearing lest the hard drudgery of the confessional and the forceful

preaching required in his former work might break his health, did not often permit him to take part in the great parochial missions given by the fathers. Yet occasionally, when the missions were particularly numerous, he was requested to deliver some of the more notable sermons. On such occasions he never failed to show his old-time fire and force, as well as to draw immense audiences.

But though the earnest apostle was now practically freed from the work of the missions, he did not waste his time or suffer his zeal, his spirit or his interest to become atrophied through idleness. He gave himself more than ever to the apostolates of the Rosary and the Holy Name. As interest in the Holy Name Society rapidly increased, and its propaganda and that of the Rosary were now the friar's almost exclusive occupation, it brought him calls from all directions, causing his journeys to be more frequent than those through which we have followed him in previous chapters.

Although the two apostolates went hand in hand, and were conducted with perhaps equal zest, we shall speak first of the good priest's labors in the cause of the Holy Name Society. This we do not only for the sake of giving a clearer idea of his efforts to promote devotion towards both our Lord and His Blessed Mother, but because the Holy Name was attracting greater attention at this period. In the case of each society, however, by reason of the impossibility of following the zealous friar in detail through his frequent journeys, it will be necessary to confine the account to a brief outline of the leading features of his labors rather than to attempt a complete and connected historical narration of them.

The name of Jesus was sweetest music to the ears of Father McKenna. It brought joy to his heart in moments of sorrow—courage, when he was tempted to despondency. Always a source of comfort to him, it was especially so in his declining years. No greater happiness could have been given him than to end his days in laboring to promote honor and devotion towards the sacred name he so reverenced. It could hardly have been otherwise, for did he not know that "our help is in the name of the Lord" and that "there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved"?

Besides, while all the devotions of his Order were dear to Father McKenna, preaching that of the Holy Name was especially so, since it has been a heritage of the Friars Preacher for more than six hundred years. Again, as the missionary knew, the favorite hymn of the Order's founder, Saint Dominic, was the *Jesu, nostra redemptio, Amor et desiderium* (Jesus, our redemption, love and desire), which he was wont to sing on his journeys through old Languedoc. Thus not even in the palmiest days of the Order did any Dominican ever preach the Holy Name or its cause more eloquently, more effectively or more constantly than did our American friar. Perhaps Saint Dominic's love for the *Jesu, nostra redemptio, Amor et desiderium* was not a more potent element in his extraordinary life than was Father McKenna's zeal for the Holy Name in his active ministry. It had been so from 1870. Now, therefore, that he was free to give himself to its apostolate he did so with a zest and an earnestness that neither age nor infirmity could chill.

The missionary's experience with the world of men

in the days of his own young manhood, no less than in his priestly ministry, taught him that, although the divine name of Jesus is grievously profaned, this is often done by Catholics thoughtlessly and without malice. In this fact he found much consolation, for it showed him that the evil habit, however deep-rooted, is not incurable. It made him believe that, could the Holy Name Society be established in all the parishes of the country, the Church would find therein an effective remedy for a widespread scandal deeply deplored by her. The same experiences taught him that perhaps there is no religious confraternity in the Church which makes so strong or so direct an appeal to the men of the United States. We have seen how, in union with his religious brethren, the holy man strove to secure the removal of the obstacle to the society's growth that came from canon law, as well as to tear down the barriers of indifference and coldness in its regard which were too prevalent in parts of America. These difficulties being now finally overcome—thanks to no one quite so much as to himself—, Father McKenna possibly desired nothing more ardently than to see, before his death, a vigorous Holy Name Society existing in every parish in the country, binding together the Catholic men of the United States in the common cause of promoting honor and reverence for the sacred names of God and Christ, and of putting down profanity and indecent language.

While it would be an exaggeration to say that the zealous apostle attained as full a measure of success as he desired, his achievements in this regard were such that they must forever crown his name with glory. Largely as a result of his labors, the parish in the

United States today that is without its Holy Name Society is almost an exception, and is regarded as lacking one of the most effective means for promoting the spiritual welfare of its men. In no part of the world has the society ever attained so large a membership or been productive of so much good as in the United States. The Order of Saint Dominic has many glorious deeds to its credit; and not the least of these is the great Holy Name Society it has built up in our American republic—an accomplishment due in no small part to the zeal and the preaching of the subject of this biography. As long as the Holy Name Society survives in the New World, so long must the memory of the great Dominican friar continue not merely to live, but also to be cherished in the hearts of American Catholics.

Another aim that Father McKenna had in view in his propagation of devotion to the Holy Name was to quicken our men in the practice of their religion. In his long experience as a missionary and director of souls he had learned that the members of the society constituted the best elements in a parish, and also that parishes in which it was established showed to better spiritual advantage than those without it. He saw, furthermore, that the society brought men to the sacraments more regularly; that it was an excellent means of promoting frequent communion—a matter in which he was deeply interested. Nor was this all. A keen observer, the pious friar saw that, outside the Church, the trend of the age is materialistic and atheistic; that the spirit of commercialism is becoming dominant everywhere. He realized that membership in the Holy Name Society would curb such a tendency in

Catholics, as well as beget in them habits of honesty and truthfulness; that the faith which they would thus profess in the divinity of Christ and the reverence which they would manifest for religion and God, would be an effective weapon against the spirit of irreligion and the scurrilous ways of those with whom they come into contact. All this added zest to his propaganda and sustained him in his tireless activity in behalf of the society.

For years the missionary had realized the need of current literature on the subject of the Holy Name; that is, of an organ to champion its cause, to arouse a broader interest in it, to make its purpose better known, as well as to form a bond of more intimate union between its members and to keep them informed of its progress. Such a publication, he felt, he had neither the time nor the temperament to edit himself. Yet he prayed that it might come into existence. Shortly after his return from the Holy Land, his heart was rejoiced to learn that preparations were being made for the publication of the present *Holy Name Journal*. Always ready to aid a good cause, he prepared a paper on the origin, purpose and progress of the Holy Name Society which appeared in the first issue, May, 1907, thus contributing what he called his "mite" to the success of the new adventure.

As Father McKenna had anticipated—for he was generally right in his views—, *The Holy Name Journal* became at once, as it has continued to be, a power for the good of the society. Its success, we may believe, was due in no small measure to the impetus given it by his paper appearing in the initial issue, the deep concern he did not cease to show in it until called to

his reward, and the occasional contributions with which he honored its columns.

It has been seen how the missionary not only welcomed the formation of diocesan unions of the Holy Name, but did all in his power to encourage their multiplication throughout the land, believing them to be a most efficacious means of arousing interest in the society and of advancing religion. So, too,—and for the same purpose—he spared no efforts to foster the custom of holding Holy Name rallies in cities and large towns. Through the columns of *The Holy Name Journal* and other Catholic papers, as well as from the pulpit, Father McKenna ceased not to advocate both of these means of popularizing the confraternity and accelerating its growth. The result of the propaganda we all know. The diocesan unions multiplied apace, while the rallies in the great cities of the country became yearly events of national importance, and elicited the highest encomiums from the public press. Instead of the former thousands, tens of thousands now marched in these parades through streets lined with enormous crowds. Tremendous was the impression produced on the public mind by these great demonstrations which were not only solemn and courageous professions of faith in the divinity of Christ, but as well protestations against any profanation of the sacred name of the Lord.

To be asked to preach on the occasion of these rallies was considered no small honor. But no ecclesiastic was quite so much in demand for such sermons as the venerable Dominican. The people of every locality seemed anxious to see and hear him again. Indeed, it was not possible for him to accept all requests thus

made for his services. Yet many and enthusiastic were the audiences he held enraptured by his superb oratory at such gatherings.

Rapid as had been the multiplication of Holy Name confraternities under the stimulus of Father McKenna's apostolate during the period from 1900 to 1906, their subsequent growth was still more phenomenal. While the "Apostle of the Holy Name," as he was called, was not often asked to lend a hand of help on the missions, he was in constant demand for Holy Name triduums or retreats, either to inspire the men with greater vigor or to establish the society in some new locality. These requests the zealous priest rarely declined—never when it was at all possible to accept—, although they carried him into almost every part of the country. The great increase in his Holy Name work compelled him to obtain assistance not only for his correspondence, but for triduums for the society and the establishment of new branches.

To advance the society so dear to him, as also to increase its membership and to make it more prolific in good, nothing was too laborious or too trivial for the energetic apostle to undertake. He had ceaselessly studied ways and means of winning souls to God through the missions. He now displayed the same ingenuity in accomplishing the same end through the Holy Name Society. Eloquent as he had ever been when preaching to the great throngs that attended his missions, he never rose to sublimer heights of oratory than when he now addressed men of the Holy Name. Realizing that as the twig is trained, so it grows into a tree, he continued to establish junior Holy Name branches, not merely that they might be feeders to the

senior societies of men, but serve as a means to form youth to a righteous life.

With all this he did not cease to send letters of appeal to those parts where he had not yet been given a free hand, until by the end of the period of which we are speaking, there was scarcely a diocese east of the Rocky Mountains in which he was not authorized to found and preach the Holy Name broadcast; few in which it had not taken deep root. At the same time, he sought to enlist the sympathies of the different religious orders in his apostolate, whether on their missions or in their other spheres of activity, and procured for them ample powers to act in its cause. Nor did he neglect our Catholic colleges and seminaries, for he wished to see the society established in all of these.

Year by year, under the impulse of Father McKenna's tireless zeal, the Holy Name Society continued to gain in numbers, influence and popularity. So constantly, in fact, was he at his work that people could not understand how he stood the strain. Rarely was he to be found at home—scarcely ever on Sunday, unless he was preaching there. Far and wide he traversed and re-traversed the country in the cause of God.

Father McKenna's efforts to arouse or deepen interest in the Holy Name Society may be said to have culminated in 1911. That year also brought to him the realization of a long cherished desire—a congress of the Holy Name in the United States. When arrangements had been concluded for the assembling of the congress in Baltimore, October 16–17, immediately after the dual celebration in honor of Cardinal Gibbons, the holy man's heart was so filled with joy that he wrote:

"I can only thank God that I have lived to see the day when a National Congress of our Holy Name Societies is about to be convened. The thought of this has been in my mind and in my prayers for years. So far as it depends on human efforts, we must look for its success to the approbation of our bishops and to the faithful co-operation of our zealous spiritual directors. You will have both, I am sure. Were I to write a book, I could not say enough about the zeal, desire and determination that I have personally witnessed on the part of our bishops and priests to leave nothing undone in making the men of America loyal Catholics. They have chosen the Holy Name Society as the practical method for accomplishing this end. As to the real success of the Holy Name Congress, we must turn to God and unceasingly invoke His blessing. This is merely the old rule of St. Augustine—to work as though everything depended on our work and to pray as though everything depended on prayer.

"May God bless the Holy Name Congress. May it be convened not because other congresses are held, but that it may result in infusing new life into every Holy Name Society throughout the country. May it be a call to arms in which all the Catholic men of America will enlist under the standard of the Holy Name to fight the irreligious spirit of our day, to destroy the revolt of Socialism against authority. May the Holy Name Congress bring a special blessing of God on the men and on the Church of America."[1]

As religion was the inspiration of all the pious priest's actions, his joy was enhanced by the blessing sent the Congress by Pius X and the Most Reverend Hyacinth Cormier—the General of his Order, under whose special care the Holy Name Society is placed. Not merely was Father McKenna invited to take part in the Congress; he was requested to make one of the principal addresses to the hierarchy and the delegates

[1] Letter to Rev. John T. McNicholas, O.P., April 15, 1911, in *The Holy Name Journal*, May, 1911.

—an honor doubtless bestowed upon him not only in recognition of his long and eminent services in the cause of the society, but also because of his oratorical ability. No speaker at the Congress received a warmer welcome than he. When he arose to make his address, the distinguished audience stood for a moment to testify their reverence for the venerable man who had done so much for the Church of America.

Such, in outline, were Father McKenna's labors in behalf of the Holy Name Society at this time. Because all obstacles had been removed, his efforts were bearing far more abundant fruit. Long before, the country at large had bestowed upon him the richly merited title of "Apostle of the Holy Name in the United States," an honor which his humility caused him to seek to disclaim, but which many years of faithful service forced him to accept—an honor which, indeed, he would still have deserved had he done no more for the society than he accomplished during the five years which we have just sketched.

A potent factor in the amazing growth of the Holy Name Society was the decree of Pius X regarding frequent and daily communion, which was probably designed to destroy that last remnant of Jansenism still visible—particularly among men—in the custom of receiving the Blessed Sacrament only at long intervals. The men of the Holy Name, it soon became apparent, were more faithful than others to this sacred duty. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a more inspiring and edifying spectacle than some hundreds of men, with bowed heads and reverent demeanor, approaching the communion-rail in a body. Yet this could be witnessed many times a year in those churches in which

confraternities of the Holy Name were established. This naturally attracted the notice of pastors and helped to arouse their interest in the society.

Father McKenna in his extraordinary devotion to the Holy Name Society did not neglect the apostolate of the Rosary, but preached it no less zealously and constantly than before. While he established more Holy Name societies than Rosary confraternities at this time, one of the reasons was that the latter existed previously in more churches, and thus did not need to be founded in many of the parishes to which he was now called in the interest of the Holy Name Society. Wherever Father McKenna went, he sought to spread and intensify the salutary devotion of the Rosary among the people—urged them to make it a part of their daily lives. If he did not find a confraternity in a church, he obtained the consent of the pastor to establish it. If he found it in existence, he strove to further its good work by encouraging all the congregation to become members, inculcating fidelity to its ideals, pointing out the graces and spiritual advantages that come to those who thus place themselves under the patronage of the Mother of God.

In the years of his boyhood and early manhood the Rosary had been Charles McKenna's favorite prayer. When he became a Dominican, quite naturally, his devotion to it was intensified. It was so from the days of his novitiate. For was he not aware of the Rosary's intimate association with Saint Dominic? Did he not recognize in it one of the most splendid heritages of his Order? Did he not know that some of the most glorious pages in the history of the Friars Preacher are precisely those which treat of

their preaching of its apostolate, and that the true son of Dominic must always be a true son of Mary, devoted to her beads? The propaganda of the Rosary, like that of the Holy Name, was part and parcel of his life. That the membership of the Rosary Society has reached such enormous numbers in the United States is due in no small measure to Father McKenna's zeal in its behalf.

As "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh," so some of Father McKenna's best preaching at this period was on the Rosary. Like the Holy Name, it was a subject that appealed to his heart and never failed to stir him to the heights of eloquence. While, indeed, at times in the pulpit he rivalled the matchless oratory of Lacordaire or Father Tom Burke; in his propaganda of devotion to the Rosary he was scarcely less zealous and tirelessly active than had been his confrère of the middle ages, Alan de la Roche. At this period, too, he gave many retreats, preached many triduums, to members of the Rosary Society. And it is worthy of note that in the families of his most intimate friends the pious custom obtained of making the recitation of the beads a part of their daily evening prayers.

As the great Dominican led a crowded church in the recitation of the beads on the occasion of the establishment of the Rosary, or while giving a triduum or retreat to members of the Society, the scene recalled the words of our popular American poet in *Evangeline:*

"Then came the evening service. Tapers gleamed from the altar;
Fervent and deep was the voice of the priest, and the people responded,

Not with their lips alone, but their hearts; and the Ave Maria
Sang they, and fell on their knees, and their souls, with devotion translated,
Rose on the ardor of prayer, like Elijah ascending to heaven."

Thus although, for the reasons given, Father McKenna's name has not been so conspicuously or so intimately associated in the public mind with the Rosary as with the Holy Name, he deserves the title of "Apostle of the Rosary" not less than that of "Apostle of the Holy Name." Many would add to these titles that of "Apostle or Prince of Parochial Missions in America," to which they claim he is entitled by reason of his long service on them (practically forty years), the extraordinary zeal and eloquence he devoted to them, the great good he accomplished through them. In truth, all things considered, it must be said that the holy friar perhaps stands almost without a peer in this fruitful field of apostolic labor.

The Dominican Fathers of the California province had often invited Father McKenna to preach or to give missions in the far west. Happy as he would have been to accede to these requests, his engagements at home had rendered it impossible for him to do so. In the December of 1908, however, at the solicitation of the western provincial, he started for San Francisco, travelling by easy stages. During the two months he remained on the Pacific coast, he preached from Seattle to San Diego, everywhere meeting with great success.

Active as was Father McKenna in the interests of his two cherished societies, he found time even at this period to busy himself with other matters that merit the reader's attention—such, for instance, as giving

short courses of conferences or special sermons to various communities of sisters. As has been noted in a previous chapter, the pious priest had long been much sought after for such work, but perhaps the demand for his services in this sphere had never been so great as now, when his wisdom, prudence and holiness had been tried in the crucible of time. Strong and tactful, yet the incarnation of gentleness and kindness, Father McKenna was peculiarly fitted to deal with questions of the soul. He had a way, peculiar to himself, of calming the consciences of Christ's spouses, of giving them peace of mind, of guiding them in the path of perfection. Few confessors have been so sought after by this class of the faithful, or have so implicitly possessed their confidence. Generations must pass before the memory of his fatherly assistance will be forgotten by the nuns of this country.

Apart from his Rosary and Holy Name work, the assistance he gave the missionaries from time to time, and the occasional small missions he conducted himself until as late as 1910, Father McKenna preached extensively and gave numerous retreats, particularly in the summer months, during the period of which we now write. He was still in great demand as the orator for church dedications or other special occasions and still continued to deliver many lectures. Not infrequently these were on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. As his mind remained as alert as in his younger days, his memory as retentive, his reminiscences of the holy places he then visited served him well on whatever topic or occasion he spoke. All who heard him were amazed to see how he retained his mental vigor, how his wit had lost none of its sparkling humor, how he continued to profit by all he saw.

Withal, he retained a keen interest in the other religious confraternities of his Order, such as the Angelic Warfare and the Blessed Imelda Sodality. He not only kept up his habits of reading and study, but made continual efforts to better the spiritual work of his pen. In 1913 he brought out *The Treasures of the Rosary,* a book that, with its clear, simple style and spiritual touch, is destined to have its part in making his apostolate for the society of the same name live long after him. Of this work Cardinal Gibbons says in his preface:

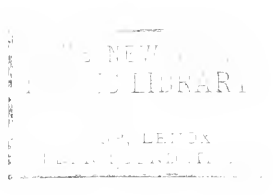
"Father McKenna has indeed conferred a real benefit on the English-speaking Catholic world by this book of devout reflections on the mysteries and treasures of the Rosary. Great multitudes, both of the clergy and the laity, will sincerely rejoice that he has left to them in permanent form something of those inspired thoughts and words that have been instrumental during his long and fruitful life in directing so many thousands into the ways of holiness and salvation. . . . Heartily, then, will Catholics of all classes welcome this volume of Father McKenna's, in which the Rosary, with its history, mysteries and treasures, is clearly and beautifully set before us. Thoughtful use of the book will doubtless make the Rosary better known and better appreciated, and will thereby contribute not a little to a fuller knowledge and a more ardent love of the ever blessed Mother of our Saviour, the Queen of the Rosary and our advocate with God."

One of Father McKenna's greatest consolations in his old age was his knowledge of the good for souls done by the zealous priests whom he had enabled, by counsel or financial assistance, to attain their sublime station. This not only sustained him, but spurred him on, in his efforts to foster vocations to the altar. At

no other period of his life, in fact, did he accomplish more in this work of supreme charity. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to preach at the first mass of some young priest whom he had thus fathered.

Thus, as the reader has doubtless remarked, to few is it given to labor so strenuously and so fruitfully in the cause of souls at the age Father McKenna had then attained. A keen and observant clergyman who took a particular interest in his work at this time, once remarked to the writer: "The most zealous servant of God might well be content to accomplish in a lifetime the good that Father McKenna accomplished from 1906 to the end of 1911 through the apostolate of the Holy Name."

As this splendid testimony, which we do not believe to be an exaggeration, makes a fitting closing for one of the most important chapters in Father McKenna's life, we may now pass on to that which will describe the ending of his active ministry for the salvation of souls.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VERY REV. C. H. McKENNA IN HIS SEVENTY-EIGHTH YEAR.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NOBLE ENDING.

(1912–1914)

ALTHOUGH Father McKenna at times felt that the days of his apostolic activity were drawing to a close, even if his life was not near its end, with that magnificent courage which had characterized the efforts of his youth and early manhood to attain the priesthood in the Order of Saint Dominic, he determined to spend his remaining strength in the cause of the God who had given it to him. Thus to trace this last round of his labors for the salvation of souls were but to present the same picture with which, it is to be hoped, the reader has been edified in the preceding chapter.

Every year, after one has passed the age of threescore and ten, tells its tale of change. So in the life of Father McKenna we have now the additional edification of seeing him toiling zealously and strenuously on as a young giant until well within his eightieth year. Though his hair had turned grey and he was prematurely aged in early manhood, now that he was really an old man, he showed a strength which one would not have expected to find in one so frail in appearance. While at times, when worn out by his unceasing labors, the good priest was somewhat bowed and his gate unsteady, at others he walked erect, with an elastic step that indicated an extraordinary reserve force. Often, also, he seemed almost too feeble to get into the pulpit. But when once he was there, had

slowly scanned his audience, had uttered the first few words of his discourse, the people forgot their pity and their fear for him, and fancied themselves in the presence of a messenger from heaven who spoke to them with a power divine. In truth, like Saint Dominic, he was in every sense "Christ's hallowed wrestler," gentle to man, but terrible to sin which is the enemy of man.

Although Father McKenna did not now attempt any missionary work, for he felt that this was beyond his strength, even if he had time for it, he laid aside none of his other apostolic activities. Thus, as before, he continued his travels in the interest of some one or other of his various apostolates. Often he so arranged matters that he was able to attend to more than one thing on the same journey. It was this systematic foresight that enabled him to do so much, and to do it all so well.

Under the impulse of the aged friar's propaganda, the growth of his two cherished societies of the Holy Name and the Rosary continued to be amazing. We know, too, that the knowledge of the good they effected for the Church and religion was a source of keen joy to him. One could not well blame him, humble as he was, if he had felt a little pride in the extraordinary success of his endeavors; but of this there were few, if any, indications. To God, or to the superior qualifications of those who aided him in his work, rather than to any merit of his own, he attributed the phenomenal increase in these societies. There was no jealousy in his make-up to prevent him from rejoicing at the success of others—no pettiness to lessen his happiness at the sight of good, by whom-

soever it was accomplished. In all things a man of God, whatever made for the glory of the Creator or for the salvation of souls gladdened his heart.[1]

An additional word is demanded on the Holy Name, as we are now nearing the end of its apostle's labors in its behalf. In 1912 he had the singular satisfaction of establishing the society in the Ohio State Penitentiary. Some years previously he was rejoiced to see the confraternity begin to spread along the Pacific coast, while prior to that year he had the consolation of knowing that it had begun to gain a strong hold in English-speaking Canada. It was as wine to his soul to hear that on June 1, 1913, the Holy Name men of Toronto had perhaps the largest religious parade ever witnessed in that once bigoted city. About the same time he received the welcome news from distant Hawaii that the society had taken root there and counted among its members men of all the races in that cosmopolitan land. To all these places it had been transplanted through the influence of his zealous propaganda.

During the period of Father McKenna's life of which we are now speaking, the Holy Name was established in hundreds of new places in the United States; and the branches of the society had run into the thousands. More than half perhaps of these had been started by the friar himself. Such, then, were the proportions to which had grown the tree which the venerable friar had helped to plant and had watered and cultivated with careful zeal for more than forty years. It seems almost incredible that such a move-

[1] We do not remember ever having seen another person to whom the sight of good done by others gave quite so much pleasure as to Father McKenna.

ment could have been placed on so firm a basis, gathered so many adherents and become more than nation-wide within the life-span of one priest.

If to this we add what the holy Dominican did for the Rosary, and what he accomplished on the missions and through his other works, the only inference that can be drawn is: Surely, the hand of God was with this man. Forty years and more before he had promised the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes that if his health was restored, he would labor for her and her Divine Son as long as he had the strength to do so. Seldom has a promise been kept by man more faithfully or more religiously.

During these three years, as before, Father McKenna never failed to be received with great ovations by the men of the Holy Name when he preached at their rallies. We will, however, mention but three such occasions. One of these occurred in the diocese of Brooklyn; another in that of New York. The rally of Brooklyn was held July 13, 1913, that of the Bronx, a little earlier in the same year. At both not only was the missionary welcomed with prolonged and enthusiastic cheers when he rose to speak in the open air; he had frequently to interrupt his discourse because of the plaudits that greeted his climaxes. No one of the great throng that listened to him in Brooklyn was warmer in his expressions of approval than Bishop McDonnell, always a sympathetic friend of the Holy Name men.

The third instance took place in Pittsburgh, Sunday, January 11, 1914, and deserves special mention, partly because it was the last time the apostle of the society spoke at any of its rallies, and partly because

the great success with which he met on that occasion, was achieved in spite of his physical condition. About three weeks before the address was to be delivered Father McKenna contracted a severe cold that settled on his chest and threatened to develop into pneumonia. In the hope of hastening his recovery he went to spend some days at the Dominican House of Studies near the Catholic University, Washington. There his cold was cured, but it left him in such a weakened condition that the fathers sought to dissuade him from endeavoring to preach. With the missionary, however, an engagement, even of minor importance, was a duty sacredly to be fulfilled, if at all possible. In the present instance, since it was at the earnest solicitation of his friend, Bishop Canevin, that he had accepted the invitation of the Holy Name men of Pittsburgh, he felt that he must keep his promise at any hazard.

Because of Father McKenna's enfeebled health, a young priest was sent with him from Washington. Arriving at Pittsburgh on January 8, he was met by a delegation of Holy Name men, headed by their president. The zealous priest was so exhausted by his journey, however, that he had to be taken at once to the hospital of the Sisters of Mercy, where he was kept in bed until it was time for him to give his address. As a correspondent of the *Catholic Standard and Times* tells us:

"Eight thousand men, old and young, arose in Exposition Hall yesterday afternoon and gave a demonstrative welcome to a venerable, white-haired man who was slowly making his way through the huge audience to the platform. Once on the platform, the aged man's eyes swept the great interior. A broad

smile played on his countenance. Seating himself for a moment or two of contemplation, he threw aside his topcoat and revealed the simple habit of the Catholic order with which he is identified."[2]

The correspondent then proceeds to give the name of the aged orator and his mission to Pittsburgh, and to summarize the lecture. The lecture, which was on the "Divinity of Christ," was indeed a masterpiece and was considered by many as one of the friar's finest oratorical efforts. The sight of such an ocean of faces before him eager to hear the word of God always acted as a tonic upon Father McKenna's soul, giving strength to his body. So it was on this occasion, when eight thousand men hung breathless on his words. For more than an hour he swayed them at will. So carried away with his lecture were his hearers that, when he had finished, they rushed upon the platform from which he had spoken, seized him and carried him on their shoulders to address another audience of from eighteen hundred to two thousand men who, unable to gain entrance into the auditorium, had waited in another hall in the hope of catching a glimpse of the illustrious friar. But the holy man, now that his first effort was over, was so exhausted that he could give them but a talk of ten minutes and his blessing.

As the missionary had been taken from the hospital to Exposition Hall, so he had to be carried from the hall back to the hospital. There he was confined to his bed for more than two days. But before leaving Pittsburgh, although he was barely able to walk, his characteristic zeal led him to visit and console the sick in the hospital and to give a conference to the sisters

[2] *The Catholic Standard and Times*, January 17, 1914.

both there and at their mother-house in the city. Again, at his departure, hundreds of the men who had heard his lecture gathered at the station to thank him and to wish him God's blessing. For months afterwards the Catholic circles of Pittsburgh were loud in their praises of the "grand old man." When, on his return to Washington, where he was obliged to rest from his exertions, Father McKenna was asked how he had succeeded with his discourse, his reply was: "They seemed pleased with it. But I fear 'the swan has sung its song.'" Happily, however, he still had a few months left in which to soothe the souls of the faithful with the music of his voice.

Interspersed with his multitudinous labors at this time came two unique celebrations in his honor which, while they caused him some confusion, must also have occasioned Father McKenna no little satisfaction. Some of his friends, fearing that he would not live to see the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination, planned to celebrate the forty-fifth. Unknown to the missionary, the noted artist, Frederic De Henwood, I. S. A., a convert, was engaged to paint a life-size portrait of him. Mr. De Henwood made his study of the noted orator in the pulpit and strove to represent him as he appeared in moments of repose between the telling points of his discourse.

When all was ready, Rev. Bernard A. McKenna, a cousin, requested the missionary to come to Philadelphia on October 13, 1912, for a matter of importance, but gave no hint as to the nature of the business, lest the humble priest should flee the honor intended for him. In his guileless way Father McKenna accepted the invitation, and on the afternoon of the day speci-

fied met his relative at the home of the latter's mother. In the evening the unsuspecting priest went with his friend ostensibly for an auto ride. When, however, the machine halted at the Bellevue-Stratford, and Father McKenna was invited into the hotel for a moment, he began to suspect that a program had been prepared of which he had not dreamed. No sooner had he stepped into the hotel than these suspicions were confirmed, for there he was confronted by a number of friends who congratulated him on the forty-fifth anniversary of his ordination. He had not thought of this; but it was now too late to turn back. It was an occasion of much amusement to see the good priest—for he was nearsighted—, on entering the "Clover Room" of the hotel, walk over to examine a large painting which he noticed. No idea was farther from his mind than that it was a portrait of himself. When he recognized it as his own likeness, the expression of mingled surprise and confusion on his countenance was indescribable. Although the discovery was clearly a shock to his humility, his only words were: "May God forgive you!"

After the jubilarian had regained his composure, Doctor Charles H. Northrop, dean of the Hahnemann Hospital, Philadelphia, made a graceful address of presentation, offering the work of art to the Dominicans. This was happily responded to by Father McKenna's superior, the Very Rev. E. G. Fitzgerald, who accepted the portrait in the name of his province. Then came a tribute and welcome in verse written by the late Miss Eleanor Donnelly, but read by a cousin of the missionary, Miss Rose McKenna, which was followed by a beautiful and unique musical program

symbolic of the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary, the devotion which the friar loved so well.

Three hundred or more of Father McKenna's friends from different cities in the east were present at the celebration. At the close of the exercises when he had mastered his feelings, the humble servant of God thanked them for their kindly remembrance of "an old priest," accepted their tribute as intended to honor the priesthood rather than himself personally, and, with this modification, expressed his deep gratitude. The portrait now hangs on the walls of the Dominican House of Studies, at Washington, where it will long serve as an inspiration to future generations of Friar Preacher students.

The second celebration, held in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of Father McKenna's religious profession, took place in Saint Vincent Ferrer's Church and Priory, New York, Sunday, April 20, 1913. This, too, was kept from him until it was necessary to make known to him the part he was to take in it. On this occasion, however, the holy man's confusion was lessened by the fact that a brother priest, Very Rev. H. F. Lilly, who had made his profession at the same time, was associated with him in the celebration. The church of Saint Vincent Ferrer was crowded with friends at the solemn mass, and the sermon paying a well deserved tribute to the two distinguished jubilarians was preached by Rev. John T. McNicholas, O.P. After the mass a dinner was given in their honor at the convent, at which words of praise were spoken which more than once brought a blush to Father McKenna's cheek. It is worthy of remembrance that the noted English Dominican preacher and

writer, Very Rev. Vincent McNabb, who was in the United States at the time, and who had learned to love and admire Father McKenna, composed a poem for the ocasion which he read at the banquet.

It is now time to take up again the thread of our story of the apostolic priest's labors where it was left off to relate the above interesting celebrations. Shortly after his return to Washington from Pittsburgh, Father McKenna resumed his work of preaching, lecturing and ministering to souls. And so he continued until he was no longer able. Thus, for instance, we find him writing from New Hampshire to Master John McKenna, a young protégé in Philadelphia:

"ST. ANNE'S RECTORY,
"MANCHESTER, N. H., March 20, 1914.

"*My dear Boy John:*

"How good to get your letter and learn you were well. I have been in New England for nearly three weeks doing a little for our dear Lord and His Blessed Mother. Thank God I enjoy good health, though I have suffered some from the cold. The streets of Manchester are still full of ice, but the pastors take good care of your old friend. I hope your parents are well. Give them my best wishes. God bless you.

"Yours affectionately,
"C. H. McKENNA, O.P."

Father McKenna delivered many lectures during the last three years of his active life; but, not to tire the reader, we shall single out only two of these for mention. They were among the very last given by him and attracted unusual notice. The first, "Ireland and Its Apostle," was delivered in Saint Raymond's, Providence, March 15, 1914, its proceeds being ap-

plied to lessen the debt on the new church. The other, on "Saint Patrick," was given on March 25 of the same year in Saint Lawrence's, New Bedford.

As the New Bedford *Standard* of March 26, 1914, in its account of the lecture in that city, gives the writer's own impressions of the great orator on similar occasions, the reader is asked to pardon us if we make rather copious extracts from that paper. Under the caption of "What The Preacher Was Like," the *Standard* says:

"A venerable father in Israel is the Rev. E. D. [an error for C. H.] McKenna, the Dominican priest who preached last night at St. Lawrence's church on Saint Patrick. Though he is 80 years of age, his form is still erect, his eyes are clear and bright, and his voice finely resonant. It is in many respects a remarkable voice. It faithfully represents the emotions with which its owner is swayed. It is now soft and pleading, and again peals forth like a blast from a silver toned trumpet. It is the voice of a virile man, whose advancing years have not yet spelled for him that fateful word, senility. It does not pipe nor whistle in its sound, but comes forth full-throated and clear, penetrating into every nook and corner of the church edifice.

"There is another distinguishing characteristic about Father McKenna. . . . 'He is Irish through and through,' and he is very proud of the fact. No Irishman in the heat of a St. Patrick's Day celebration ever enthused more loyally and enthusiastically over the country of his ancestors than did Father McKenna last night. He delights in its history, its myths and its legends, its music, its poesy, its green grass, its lakes, its people, and beyond and above all in its religion, its saints, its priests, its bishops. The deep feeling which was expressed in every tone of his voice when he referred to the probability of the early establishment of home rule in Ireland made the writer feel that the cause of home rule lost an eloquent and convincing advocate

when Father McKenna retired to the cloister. What a power that moving voice, that commanding presence, that dignity of demeanor, that burning zeal would have been in the long drawn out campaign which has been waged so zealously for a consummation that seems now almost within grasp! In any position Father McKenna would have been a power. That he has been a moving power in the Roman Catholic Church those in New Bedford, and they are many, who have sat under his ministrations from time to time during the past years, well know.

"Father McKenna looms large in the pulpit. The only noticeable effect of advancing years upon him is the slight stoop in his shoulders, and a certain deliberateness of movement which betrays the fact that he is conserving his energies. His face is a strong one. The features are large, and strength and firmness of character are written large upon its every lineament. His gestures have in their graceful sweep no sign of weakness. He has a way of leaning over the pulpit and gripping the congregation with the power of his eyes, that not only attracts attention but demands it, and holds it. This description of him is recalled not without some difficulty, for so entrancing was the story of Ireland that he told, and so neatly pointed and turned were the sentences in which he dressed his story, that the mind was taken up with the subject matter at the expense of the personality. . . ."

Then the correspondent of the *Standard,* who signs himself "E. M. L." and who was evidently a reporter, tells how he had gone to the church in the position of a critic to study the orator, his art, his gestures, and his manner rather than to give an account of the lecture; but that "he found himself beguiled out of his wonted habit of mind into listening to the fascinating tale of good and great Saint Patrick." Of the noted Dominican he says: "His is an art that conceals art." And of his portrayal of the life of Saint Patrick, the

legends, history and scenery of the island, E. M. L. writes:

"It was like the work of a master painter who catches a glint of glowing sunlight and impinges it upon canvas in lasting colors . . ., making it a joy forever. And as he spoke, the music that once leaped from the harp that hung in Tara's halls was in his voice, the holy light which dwelt around St. Patrick was in his countenance, his eyes reflected the glories of the landscape, and his form straightened as he spoke of the heroes that had added fame and lustre to the name of 'auld Ireland,' not only in the land of their birth, but in the countries of their adoption. In fact, before Father McKenna finished with his sermon, he had made you feel that there was nothing in the world quite so glorious as being a real, true Irishman and a son of the Church, and if by the misfortune of birth you had missed being an Irishman, you had missed a great deal. . . ."

One of the most remarkable things about the saintly friar, from a physical point of view, was how he retained his extraordinary voice, in spite of exposure, hard labor and incessant public speaking, into extreme old age. Doubtless this was due in large measure to the great pains he gave in younger years to training his voice and to learning how to use it, as well as to the excellent care he took of it in subsequent life. We do not think we ever heard an orator who spoke with greater ease, or with less fatigue. All this was the reward of early thought and effort, even as his eminent holiness was the fruit of prayer and sacrifice.

Although Father McKenna had grown old in body, and perhaps at times fancied he felt the ice of death closing around him, within—in heart and mind—there were still the warmth and the sunshine of young manhood; for there the gulf-stream of youth still

flowed into the arctic regions of his life. In labor he felt "better the excess than the deficit; better the more than the less." So he toiled on in the cause of good. As the ardor of his soul gave expansion to his mind, he did not confine his efforts to the devotions of his own Order, but sought to promote all others, when his aid was wanted. To this end, with keen foresight he had long had the custom of providing himself with faculties or authorization, when such were needed, to establish or in any way to aid religious societies or devotions under the supervision of orders other than his own—a practice that he continued until the last. The papers of this character left by the missionary bear dates from the first years of his active ministry, thus giving eloquent testimony to his broad, disinterested zeal. On the one hand, he had a strong faith in all the practices approved by the Church, but doubted the wisdom of individuals endeavoring to practice a multiplicity of devotions. On the other, he thought his confrères should propagate in their congregations especially the devotions entrusted to the propaganda of the Order; but he could see no reason why a Dominican should not lend hearty support to any or all others in places where they were desired.

So, too, the apostle's efforts to foster vocations went on with unabated zeal. In this work the youthful spirit he maintained was of incalculable aid, since it enabled him to understand the mind and heart of the young—kept him in sympathy with them and in touch with their aspirations. Never in his life, perhaps, did his fatherly heart or his simple, guileless manner exercise a stronger influence over those who were many years his juniors, than during this period.

Never had he gathered under his guidance and care greater numbers of aspirants to the priesthood.

A concrete example of how the venerable religious inculcated the lofty ideals of the priesthood may be seen in the following letter to a thoughtless young student whom he had befriended. We do not think it indelicate to publish the document, because all possibility of detecting the person to whom it was written is removed by the fact that, as far as the reader is concerned, it might have been any one of the many young men who thus came under Father McKenna's paternal direction within the past forty odd years.

"NEW YORK,
"August 31.

"*Dear—:*

"Your letter of the 28th inst. is before me. I consent to your returning to —— in September, and I hope you will make your promise good. It was not simply the advancement in studies which you failed to make that displeased me in the past; it was the disposition, or rather want of disposition, which that failure manifested. Claiming to aspire to the sublime dignity of the priesthood, and knowing that a whole lifetime is not too much of a preparation, it grieved me that you could squander precious time—particularly when that time was paid for by others.

"Considering all the circumstances, as I have stated in a previous letter, none in the college should show a better record than you; none should be more devoted to prayer or study. Others, knowing your aspirations to be a Dominican, look to you for example and edification. For God's sake, then, be in earnest, and prove in the future that your heart is not in baseball or other amusements—show that you are fitting yourself for the sublime vocation to which you aspire. Ah, my son, God only knows the evil done by careless, indifferent priests. What, then,

can you expect of yourself, if you are a careless, indifferent student?

"Praying that God may bless you and confirm your good resolutions, I remain, Yours in Christ,

"C. H. McKenna, O.P."[3]

Prior to 1907 or 1908—that is before arrangements had been made by Aquinas College, Columbus, Ohio, under the charge of his province, to take aspirants for the Order—, Father McKenna had placed those who applied to him in different institutions, his favorite being the Sulpician College of Saint Charles, near Ellicott City, Maryland. But from that time, as a true Dominican, he quite naturally began to send his applicants to be trained by his own brethren. Accordingly, from this period Aquinas College has always had enrolled a goodly number of the zealous priest's neophytes. The establishment of this college had been the occasion of keen joy to the members of the eastern province of Friars Preacher in the United States, but to none more than to the aged missionary; for he had long eagerly desired to see such an educational institution under the care of the fathers, so that his young men might begin to imbibe the spirit and ideals of the Order from the beginning of their classical studies. From the outset, therefore, no one could have taken a more lively interest in the welfare of Aquinas College. Of this his friends were aware; and as they probably feared the apostle's career was near its close and wished to show him another token of their esteem, they subscribed the sum of five thousand dollars, establishing the McKenna scholarship in 1914, and stipulating that as long as he lived he should designate its beneficiary.

[3] This young man soon gave up all intentions of becoming a priest.

At no period of his career did Father McKenna labor more zealously for the promotion of the secular Third Order of Saint Dominic than after his appointment as director of the Rosary and the Holy Name. But from 1906, when he saw that his life must be drawing to its close, he appears to have taken more pains than ever before to foster its growth. Likely, indeed, one of his aims in this was to leave another legacy to his brethren in religion. Another was, perhaps, to obtain more prayers for his soul when he should be called before the judgment-seat of God; for the saintly always seem to imagine themselves unworthy of the divine mercy. Wherever he went during these years, the holy priest was sure to find numbers anxiously awaiting his coming that they might be enrolled by him into this militia of Christ. It is remarkable how many both of the clergy and the hierarchy he received into the Third Order.

Father McKenna's charity, as has been said, took in all classes and walks of life; but it went out with a special Christ-like tenderness to the poor, the sick and the afflicted. Whenever he could, he did not fail to do his utmost to console or to assist such as these. Many instances in which he played the part of the good Samaritan have come under the personal observation of the writer. We have heard of many more. All his life he was wont to visit charitable asylums for the aged, the homes of the poor, hospitals, etc. His mission, however, was to soothe and to heal ailments of the heart and soul rather than those of the body. To many a sinner on the brink of the grave or of despair did the kindly ambassador of Christ thus bring the grace of peace and reconciliation with the Divine Mas-

ter. These works of spiritual and corporal mercy also Father McKenna continued as long as he retained the strength to carry on their ministration.

So went he on until he could go no more, doing good and gathering souls to Christ in any and every way. Well and faithfully did he keep his promise to Leo XIII to die in the harness; for while Father McKenna did not actually so die, it was not his fault that he did not. All the year of 1914, from the time he left Washingon after his return from Pittsburgh, he went from pillar to post, fulfilling his vocation of priest and ambassador of Christ in a way that recalls the mission of the precursor, John the Baptist, to prepare the people for the coming of the Saviour. But God, it would seem, felt that the zealous man had done enough for others and wished to give him time to do more for himself. On September 1, Father McKenna began a week's retreat to the Holy Name men of Hopewell, New Jersey, but three days later he was stricken with failure of the heart and obliged to relinquish his work. It was an illness from which he never recovered, and which closed the days of his apostolic activity. If the missionary did not die in the harness, he fell in the harness and could not rise again. It was a noble ending to a glorious apostolate.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN INVALID.

(1914–1917)

If true be the spiritual proverb which tells us that sickness and trial are the test of one's religious character, the last two and a half years of Father Charles H. McKenna's life are a further proof of how wholly he was a man of God. So abrupt a change from a long and intensely active apostolate to a state of almost helpless decrepitude must have been trying in the extreme to one of his ardent zeal; yet he bore the affliction with heroic courage. Though he was eager to be at work again, no word of complaint or regret escaped his lips; no expression of impatience shadowed his countenance.

On September 3, 1914, the day he was stricken, the venerable missionary was taken to the convent of the Franciscan Sisters, Hopewell, New Jersey, where he received the last sacraments. The physicians held out no hope of recovery. The aged priest, they said, was beyond the aid of human science and skill. For ten days or more Father McKenna lay at the point of death; then, to the surprise of all, he began to improve and was soon able to leave Hopewell. But the days of his labor were over. Indeed, it would seem that there was a touch of the supernatural in the preservation of the missionary's life during his last years. To all who attended him in his frequent and apparently mortal attacks, it was a mystery how he continued to

live. Non-Catholic physicians were mystified, and Catholic doctors candidly admitted that it must have been through a divine power.

In December, 1914, the invalided priest came to the Dominican House of Studies in the National Capital, where he tarried for five months. At this convent, in fact, he spent nearly half of his remaining days. It was at the beginning of this period that the author was instructed to prepare the present volume. Fortunately the venerable apostle, though suffering from bodily weakness, retained his mental vigor, his splendid memory, his youthful spirits and his unfailing good humor. Indeed, in mind, memory and mood we cannot recall ever having seen Father McKenna in better condition for imparting information. Thus his sojourns in Washington afforded an excellent opportunity to gather data for his biography. The process of gathering it occasioned the grand old man not the slightest inconvenience, for he loved company and still enjoyed a story or a joke with keen relish. A number of the community were engaged in the plot, and in his guileless simplicity he permitted himself, without suspicion of our purpose, to be drawn out delightfully. The conversation generally began with a story, or with some bit of past history. Then, when he had become interested, he was led deftly on to speak of some personal episode in his life or of affairs in which he played a conspicuous part. In this way, much of the most valuable and reliable material contained in this biography was gleaned from its own subject—so much, indeed, that many of its chapters (among them some of the first importance) might be termed autobiographical.

Father McKenna's visits to Washington were, furthermore, occasions not merely of edification, but of positive inspiration to the clerical novices of the province. Although ordinarily there is little intercourse between the fathers and the students under their charge, outside of class, in this case rules were suspended and the novices were permitted to converse freely with the holy old servant of God. From his own lips they heard the wonderful story of his life—how he had labored to bring about the fulfillment of his youthful aspirations by becoming an ambassador of Christ and a worthy follower of St. Dominic; how during his long life he had ever striven to keep before his mind the loftiest ideals of the priesthood and its responsibilities. They saw him at his prayers, his meditation, his visits to the eucharistic Lord; they witnessed the devotion with which he said mass; they observed how, even at his advanced age and in his state of bodily infirmity, he endeavored to follow the community exercises.

The sick priest's submission to the will of God was manifest to all. Eager to be at work, he often asked, not: "Do you think I shall get well?", but: "Do you think I shall ever be able to work again?" Then he would add: "However, God's holy will, not mine, be done. Yet, personally, I should much prefer to be laboring in His cause and for the salvation of souls to sitting or lying here idle all the day." On more than one occasion, when asked if he would like to live his long life over again, his answer, given after some deliberation, was: "Well, yes, if it should please God, and I thought I could add to His glory and help people to get to heaven." Through all this period of

sickness similar noble sentiments escaped his lips, and that they came from the heart was evident from the simple, guileless manner in which they were uttered. Instinctively they brought to one's mind the words of the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water; so my soul panteth after thee, O God."

Father McKenna's extremely active life had obliged him to travel so constantly that change had become as a second nature to him. In consequence of this, now that he had become an invalid, he found it irksome to remain too long in one place. This little peculiarity, because of his great merits, his superiors rather fostered than discouraged, hoping thus to prolong the holy man's life. He spent much of the time as a guest of the Dominican Sisters at Blauvelt and Sparkill, two communities in which he had always taken a lively interest. Another place he visited was Saint Joseph's Priory, Somerset, Ohio, where he had received the religious habit and made his profession more than half a century before. He loved Saint Joseph's and wished to see it again before his death. From there he wrote to Rev. Bernard McKenna:

"St. Joseph's Convent,
"Somerset, Ohio, October 24, 1915.

"*Rev. dear Cousin:*

"Here I am in old St. Joseph's, where I entered the Order fifty-three years ago. What recollections the old place conjures up! All that were here then are gone to eternity, and the writer *must* soon follow. I love the old place, its sacred traditions, its beautiful surroundings. The weather is all that I could wish, and the fathers are more than kind to me. My health is about as when you saw me last. I remain here another week, and then will go to Columbus for two weeks, after which I may return to Washington, or go direct to New York City.

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FATHER McKENNA IN HIS LAST DAYS.

"Hoping you are not overburdened with work, and that all are well at home, I am, yours affectionately,

"C. H. McKenna, O.P."

It was the author's privilege to accompany Father McKenna on several of his journeys at this time; and how the aged missionary, despite his illness, retained his genial disposition and love of the innocent jest may be seen from the following incident. At the Washington railway station he discovered that his purse had escaped through a hole in his pocket, and his fare had to be paid by another. Though mortified, the humble friar took the misfortune good-naturedly. On the train he attracted the writer's attention with his cane. Then he said with a smile: "I want to tell you a story. Of course you know old women often use their stockings as a purse; but I'll bet you never heard of a man being gifted with such ingenuity. Now this old gentleman has grown wise in his dotage, and has done just such a thing. Look down there in my sock and you'll find the lost money." He thoroughly enjoyed the incident and delighted to tell it to his friends.

Father McKenna never grew old, except in body. Until the end he retained his splendid voice, his ready wit and the ways of a young man. All this made conversation with him a pleasure, and was a source of consolation to the many friends who visited him during the time he was an invalid.

During all his priestly life the missionary had kept up an extensive correspondence, for people from every part of the country wrote to him regarding every possible subject, but especially on matters pertaining to the soul. Even at this time, he sought to answer all

letters, as far as his strength allowed. In this he was greatly aided by the rapidity which long practice had given him, whether in writing or dictation, and by his felicitous way of saying much in little space. Except on business, he seldom wrote more than a few lines. The following letter to P. F. McDonnell, of New York, may serve as a fair sample of the aged apostle's responses to inquiries about his health.

"DOMINICAN HOUSE OF STUDIES,
"WASHINGTON, D. C., January 22, 1915.

"*Dear good Patrick:*

"This is to let you know that, through God's love and mercy, I am improving nicely each day. I received your letter and reply that I want for nothing, except more love for God. This is the sixth letter I have written today.

"Ever affectionately yours,
"C. H. McKENNA."

So also did he still endeavor to keep abreast of all that concerned the Church and religion, and retain his interest in the Rosary Confraternity and the Holy Name Society. When he heard that the membership of the latter society had reached a million and a half, the zealous old apostle exclaimed: "Now, I should be able to die happy." A letter belonging to this time that brought him special satisfaction was one from Brother Joseph Dutton, Father Damien's successor in the work of caring for the lepers in Hawaii. This Christ-like charity had always made a strong appeal to the Dominican friar. And for nearly thirty years it had been his wont to write Brother Joseph an occasional word of encouragement. The letter from Hawaii was all the more acceptable because accompanied by documents giving interesting information

on the life of the present hero of the Molokai leper colony.[1]

Illness could not chill the ardor of Father McKenna's zeal. Thus, wherever he went during this time, we find him preaching or giving conferences to sisters; but his weakness was such that he was obliged to speak sitting in a chair.

Three incidents showing how unquenchable was the holy man's zeal to do good belong to his last lengthy stay at the House of Studies. One of them was an appeal made to the Holy Name men of the country in behalf of an undertaking in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Father McKenna always maintained that love and devotion to our Lord and love and devotion to His Mother should go hand in hand. He could not separate the two. All his life the apostle of the Holy Name had strongly urged that the society be used solely in the interest of men's souls. But now he was to make his one exception to this rule. This was the Basilica or National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, which the Catholic University is preparing to erect on its grounds at the National Capital as the United States' greatest artistic tribute to the Mother of God. In this noble undertaking the humble servant of Mary thought the Holy Name Society should have its part. On December 10, 1915, therefore, through the columns of *The Holy Name Journal,* he

[1] Brother Joseph Dutton's deep regard for Father McKenna may be judged from an Easter card, on which is inscribed: "To dear Father McKenna, O.P., from your adopted son, Joseph Dutton." It should also be noted that when Brother Joseph was thinking of devoting his life to the lepers of Molokai he went to consult Father McKenna as to the advisability of such a step. And it is said that the hearty encouragement he received from the zealous Dominican was largely responsible for his taking up that heroic work.

addressed a letter of earnest appeal to the members of the society through all the country, urging them to attest their love of Him in whose name they were united, by contributing to such a commemoration of His blessed Mother.[2]

The second incident to which we have referred as belonging to this period was a sermon preached by him, seated in a chair, to the aged and incapacitated Catholic veterans at the National Soldiers' Home in Washington. Just six years before Father McKenna gave one of his last missions at this institution and established the Holy Name Society there. He was now rejoiced to find the confraternity in a flourishing state. The discourse on the present occasion, delivered in Lent, created the profoundest impression among these former defenders of the country and continues to be a frequent topic of discussion among them. The third and last event was a short retreat given to a friend who came to Washington at this time and asked the aged friar to do him this favor. The gentleman in question remarked that he had never listened to anything quite so touching, so inspiring or so sublime as these heart-to-heart talks. The zealous old apostle, who was now an easy prey to drafts, caught a severe cold while giving the retreat; but so intent was he on his work that, instead of going to bed, as he should have done, he continued at his conferences until he was brought to the verge of pneumonia and had to be taken to the hospital.

But one of the most edifying things in Father McKenna's life, while he was an invalid, was his continued effort to foster vocations. Not merely did he keep in constant touch with the aspirants to the priest-

[2] See *The Holy Name Journal* of January, 1916.

hood or the religious life whom he already had under his protection; he sought in every way to encourage and to aid the many new ones who felt called to the "better part" and had recourse to his guidance.

The missionary's recurring illness had so sapped his vitality that from May, 1916, he had to keep to his bed much of the time. As a pious priest his greatest privation was that he was often unable to say mass. That he might satisfy his devotion to his eucharistic Lord and have the consolation of offering up the holy sacrifice, Rome, because of his great merits and the intercession of Cardinal Farley, granted the invalid clergyman the extraordinary privilege not only of celebrating mass shortly after midnight and in his room, but of saying it in a sitting posture and of commencing at the offertory. This dispensation he did not fail to use, whenever he had strength enough to say mass in this way, but was unable to follow the rubrics. As the fall advanced, the physicians, fearing the cold of the north might bring on an attack of pneumonia that would prove fatal, urged the aged religious to spend the winter in Florida. To this plan Father McKenna gave his consent, for although he had now become convinced that he could not expect to return to active work, he felt he would like to live to see the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. His provincial, the Very Rev. J. R. Meagher, O.P., advised that the doctors' suggestion be followed, and promised to send Brother Dominic Mullahy, a lay brother, as companion on the journey—a kindness that elicited the following grateful and affectionate reply.

"St. Dominic's Convent,
"Blauvelt, Rockland Co., New York,
"November 6, 1916.

"*Very dear Father Provincial:*

"I received your two letters, and I wish to express to you the deep gratitude which fills my heart. Your uniform goodness and kindness overpowers me, and has increased not only my respect, but my affection for you. I also appreciate the many good things you have so kindly said of me. The world sees only the better side of the picture. I can understand how heavy are your burdens, and how great your cares must be, and I promise you herewith an increase of prayers and supplications in your behalf.

"Again thanking you for all your goodness and kindness towards me in every way, as also for sending Brother Dominic along to take care of the old man, I remain yours very affectionately and obediently,

"C. H. McKenna, O.P."

Five days later, the venerable priest started for the south, but stopped at Washington to rest and to be at the House of Studies for the celebration of the seventh centenary of the Order's papal confirmation, at which his brethren desired his presence. The celebration extended from November 14 to November 19, and was an event to which he had looked forward with an intense concern because he expected it to redound to the good of his province, as well as to the glory of his institute. To no one more than to the aged missionary did the words of praise for the Order of Saint Dominic spoken in the various discourses at these solemnities make a stronger appeal. As he said, they made his ears "ring with delight." Tears of joy glistened in his eyes, and fervently did he thank God that he had been spared to see that day. On this occa-

sion, as has been said on a previous page, no one was the recipient of greater honor than Father McKenna. Cardinals Gibbons and Farley, the Apostolic Delegate and all the other prelates and clergy went specially to the room of the revered apostle to wish him well and to offer him their sympathy in his failing health.

The same week the provincial called a meeting of the superiors of the province at the House of Studies. Because they feared the holy man's life was near its end, and wished to hear a last word from him on a subject that was near to them, the fathers requested the veteran missionary to address them on vocations and his method of fostering them. This he did in his usual earnest and affective manner for nearly an hour. All were visibly affected by the talk, for no one knew better than Father McKenna how to reach the heart.

The above address was delivered on the morning of November 16, and that evening (for he did not remain for all the celebration), Father McKenna continued his way to Jacksonville. Shortly before his departure, the clerical students gathered to say good-by to their venerable friend, and to ask a few words of spiritual advice. But the saintly priest was so fatigued and affected that he could speak for only a few minutes. Closing his address with: "We shall dispense with shaking hands, and take it for granted that there is between us what that little ceremony signifies—a union of hearts,"—he then bade his clerical audience, many of whom were his protégés, to kneel for his blessing. With a fervent "God bless and protect all of you," he turned to go for his train, and saw none of them again on earth.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DEATH, BURIAL, FINAL HONORS.

(1917)

THE balmy air of Florida agreed with the veteran apostle, and at first he gained in strength under the care of the Sisters of Charity at Jacksonville. But in the course of a few weeks his sickness began to return. At each collapse it was thought he could not survive. His mind, however, remained alert and vigorous, his memory retentive. There was no lessening of his good humor; and when he was not too weak, his cheerful disposition was as a ray of sunshine to those around him.

Early in February, 1917, the sick man was seized with his last attack. Although he rallied somewhat, he never grew strong enough to leave his bed. From February 14 he gradually sank, but retained consciousness almost to the moment when, without a struggle and fortified by the rites of the Church, he passed away on the morning of February 21. With his holy life and long years of strenuous service behind him, surely the aged friar could with no small measure of assurance have said: "Lord, dying I salute Thee, for I have preserved my soul from the world's taint, I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Although Father McKenna's demise might have been expected at any time within the last two years of his life, he had so often been at the point of death

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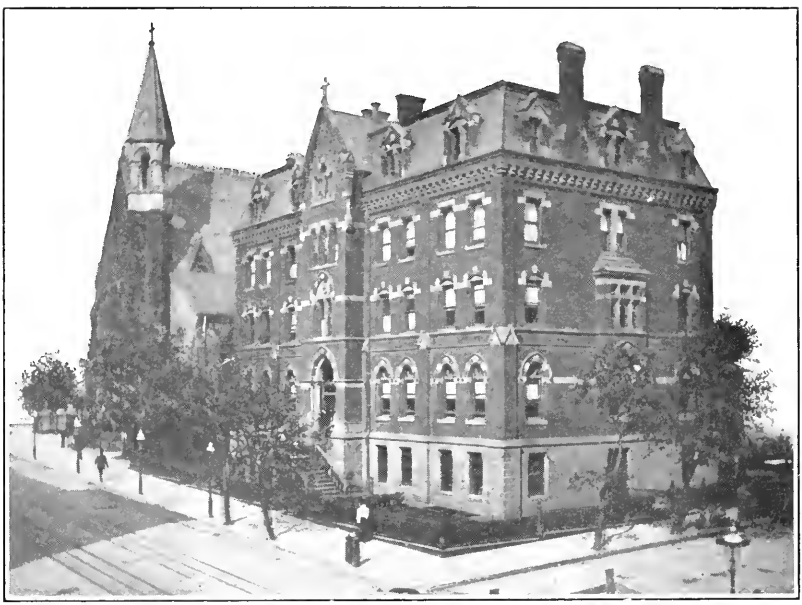

SAINT VINCENT FERRER'S CONVENT NEW YORK.

and had so often rallied that the announcement came as a shock. The sorrow caused by the loss of so great and so holy a priest was visible on the countenance of every one. The body of the venerable missionary was brought north by Brother Joseph Corcoran, who had succeeded Brother Dominic in the care of the invalid. Upon the arrival of the remains in New York City they were met at the railway station by a large delegation made up of Dominican Fathers, many personal friends of Father McKenna, and hundreds of members of the Holy Name Society, and, thus escorted, were taken to Saint Vincent Ferrer's Priory, Sixty-fifth Street and Lexington Avenue, where they lay in state until half-past five o'clock, Sunday evening.

Then began the most extraordinary manifestation of love and devotion of the faithful towards a simple priest the writer has ever been privileged to witness. From the time Father McKenna's remains were laid in state in the parlor of the priory until their removal, more than two days later, there was a constant stream of friends, admirers and Holy Name men filing past them from the early hours of the morning until half-past ten at night, when the doors of the convent were closed. They came not merely from every part of New York, but from many other cities and towns, both near and distant, to pay their respects and to bid a last farewell to a faithful ambassador of Christ whom they had known or admired in life—to offer up a prayer at the bier of one from whom they had at some time received a spiritual blessing.

In the great crowds were to be seen people of every age and walk of life. Tottering age vied with the vigor of manhood in showing the illustrious Dominican

honor and veneration; while side by side the very rich and the very poor struggled to get a last look at an humble priest who somehow had won the homage of all hearts. The faces of all showed clearly the sorrow that was within their bosoms; many were in tears. It was an extraordinary manifestation of devotion. But more striking still was the fact that among the many thousands who viewed the holy friar's remains, few came without a rosary, a prayer-book or some other religious article with which they touched his hands, his head, or his beads—well worn by long years of use—, as they passed along in procession. No greater proof could have been given that he was universally regarded as a saint. Through the nights of Friday and Saturday, after the convent doors had been closed, some three hundred men of the Holy Name Society from New York and its vicinity were permitted, at their own request, to watch and pray beside the coffin of their great apostle.

At half-past five o'clock, Sunday evening, February 25, Father McKenna's remains were transferred from the parlors of the priory to the temporary church on Sixty-seventh Street, between Lexington and Third avenues. Before the hearse walked the community of Saint Vincent Ferrer's and many visiting priests dressed in clerical garb; behind it followed a procession of fifteen hundred Holy Name men and sorrowing relatives or friends. In front of the convent and along the route traversed were gathered some thousands of persons from far and near. The church meanwhile had been filled to its utmost capacity, many having come an hour or more before the time appointed for the removal of the remains. To show their

esteem for the departed priest, the policemen and firemen belonging to the stations across the street from the temporary church stood in line along the pavement. As the hearse passed them, the former held their batons at salute, and the latter tolled the bells of their engines which had been brought to the doors of their department.

At the church, streams of humanity continued to flow in to bid a final farewell to their friend. There again was the same intermingling of age and youth, of wealth and poverty, of the professional classes and the common laborer that characterized the crowds which had flocked to the parlors of the cloister on the same errand of veneration. There was shown also the same anxiety to touch the remains of the holy man with beads or other religious articles; there were the same expressions of grief.

So it continued until eleven o'clock that night, when the doors of the sacred edifice were closed. But just before this the whole Rosary was recited in unison by the great multitude present for the repose of the soul of Father McKenna. This night also several hundred Holy Name men kept vigil over the bier of their society's apostle.

On Monday, February 26, masses were said at six, half-past six, eight and half-past eight, while a high requiem for the deceased missionary was sung at seven by the Very Rev. J. R. Heffernan, prior of his convent. At all these services and up to nine o'clock, when the funeral cortège started for the cathedral, the temporary Saint Vincent Ferrer's Church, which seats eleven hundred persons comfortably, was filled with worshippers who prayed for the dead priest, bade him

an affectionate adieu, and carried home as treasured relics the articles which had touched his body. It was estimated that from thirty to thirty-five thousand people viewed Father McKenna's remains while they lay in state in the convent parlors and the church. Many came from points as far distant as Fall River, Boston, Troy, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh and Chicago.

The first intention had been to bury the distinguished missionary from Saint Vincent Ferrer's Church on Saturday, February 24. Notice to this effect had been sent abroad; but, because of Father McKenna's national character and eminent services to the American Church, Cardinal Farley and Monsignor Michael J. Lavelle, V.G., requested that this honor be given to the diocesan cathedral and that the funeral be postponed until Monday, February 26. The kindly request, which was all the more noteworthy as this arrangement interfered with a mission under way in the cathedral parish, was gladly accepted by the Dominican Fathers. The change, however, was an occasion of disappointment to many who had come from a distance with the expectation of being present at the obsequies on Saturday, but could not remain until the later date.

From the Dominican church the hearse bearing the remains of the noted preacher was escorted by fifteen hundred Holy Name men to Saint Patrick's Cathedral, where the remains were met at the doors by the rector, Monsignor Lavelle. At ten o'clock a solemn requiem mass was sung by Right Rev. Patrick Hayes, auxiliary bishop of New York, assisted by Revs. Bernard A. and James J. McKenna, cousins of the de-

ceased, as deacon and subdeacon. His Eminence Cardinal Farley presided on the throne, having as deacons of honor Rev. Bernard F. Logan, O.P., and the venerable Passionist, Father Robert McNamara, the latter of whom asked to be permitted to take part in the ceremonies in honor of his revered fellow missionary. The sermon was preached by the provincial of the Dominicans, Very Rev. J. R. Meagher. After the mass, Cardinal Farley, assisted by Monsignor John Edwards, V.G., a life-long friend of Father McKenna, gave the final absolution.

Seated in the sanctuary during the mass were the Right Rev. John J. Nilan, bishop of Hartford, the Right Rev. John J. McCort, auxiliary bishop of Philadelphia, fifteen or more red-robed monsignori and some two hundred priests, from various parts of the country. Of these latter about eighty were Dominicans, the others either diocesan clergy or representatives of religious orders. Another noteworthy tribute to the holy friar was the presence in the church of some hundreds of sisters belonging to various communities that had received the spiritual ministrations of the apostolic priest.

Notwithstanding the fact that Father McKenna's death had not been advertised, that the date and place of his obsequies had been changed, and that few among the multitudes who had attended the masses at Saint Vincent Ferrer's were present, Father McKenna's was one of the largest funerals ever held at Saint Patrick's Cathedral. It is estimated that between four and five thousand lay people were present, among them many members of the dead priest's beloved Holy Name Society. Here again was to be noticed the

varied character of the apostle's admirers, for there were both young and old, rich and poor. Tears were in the eyes of many. A number of colored persons could be seen here and there in the great edifice. These probably remembered or had heard of the interest shown by Father McKenna in those of their race in the early years of his ministry in New York, and came to show their gratitude.

By reason of the numbers who had viewed the remains while they lay in state at St. Vincent's Priory and Church, it was thought it would not be necessary to open the casket in the cathedral, and orders were given to that effect. At the request of Cardinal Farley, however—who said there were still many who, like himself, would like to see for the last time the venerable servant of God—, the command was cancelled. So after the sermon the vast throng which filled the stately Gothic edifice, filed up the middle aisle past the bier of the dead priest. Again it was noticed that few out of these thousands failed to touch his remains with some religious article.

This ceremony over, Father McKenna's remains were taken to Calvary Cemetery. Several hundred persons followed them to their last resting place. At the grave about sixty Dominicans and some friends among the secular clergy sang the *Benedictus* in harmony. Then he was laid to rest.

Many bishops and priests who were unable to attend Father McKenna's funeral—whether because they did not receive word in time, had prior engagements, were unwell or lived too far away—sent letters or telegrams that eloquently testified their love and high regard for the faithful apostle. Bishop Dougherty of Buffalo,

for instance, wrote to Rev. Bernard A. McKenna that, had he learned sooner of his friend's death, he would gladly have come from Florida for the obsequies. And Bishop Shahan wrote to the Very Rev. J. R. Meagher, O.P., provincial:

"Office of the Rector,
"The Catholic University of America,
"Washington, D. C.,
"March 14, 1917.

"*Dear Father Meagher:*

"I was in the far west when dear Father McKenna passed away, and reached here only a few days ago. Though tardy, my sympathy for you all is none the less sincere. That great and good man of God is surely now intercessor for us all, in the company of angels and saints, with so many of his white-robed brethren. His time had come, no doubt, yet we all feel poorer for his loss, and know that we shall not easily look upon his like in our day and time. I loved him from our first acquaintance, as indeed everyone did, and confided in him as in one who had the secret of goodness and mercy, and gladly made it known to all men. From his urn he will long speak to you all and to us, his friends and admirers.

"With best wishes, very sincerely yours in Christo.

"Thomas J. Shahan."

Two other short letters and a telegram, taken off-hand from the many sent Rev. J. R. Heffernan, will suffice to show the character of the rest.

"Springfield, Massachusetts,
"February 24, 1917.

"*Dear Father:*

"My deep and ever abiding esteem for good Father McKenna will keep his memory green '*ad altare.*'

"Yours in Christ

"Thomas D. Beaven."

"Ogdensburg,
"February 24th, 1917.

"*Rev. Dear Father:*

"I regret very much that I cannot, by being present at the funeral, testify my esteem for the lamented Preacher General of your Order. He was a new Bernardine of Sienna. I will pray for him here.

"Respectfully,
"H. Gabriels,
"*Bishop of Ogdensburg.*"

"Manchester, New Hampshire,
"February 24, 1917.

"My heartfelt sympathies over the death of the great and saintly Father McKenna.

"G. A. Guertin."

Letters of condolence were also received from a number of young aspirants to the priesthood who were still under the holy man's guidance or protection. One of those addressed to Saint Vincent Ferrer's, New York, will serve as sample of the others.

"Epiphany Apostolic College,
"Walbrook, Baltimore, Maryland,
"February 26th, 1917.

"*My dear Rev. Fathers:*

"The sorrowful news of your sudden and unexpected bereavement in the loss of dear Father McKenna has just reached me, and I hasten to join with the other students here in extending to you all our heartfelt sympathy. We had Holy Mass offered for him this morning, and we shall remember him daily in our prayers and Holy Communions. If you have any memorial cards, I should be very pleased if you would send me a few by return mail.

"Again assuring you all of our heartfelt sorrow, I remain, yours sincerely in Christ.

"John F. Costello."

Numerous, indeed, were the masses offered up for the venerable apostle. As shown by the Catholic papers, pastors scattered throughout the land, remembering some mission or other service conducted by him in their respective churches as far back as thirty years or more, sang a requiem mass for the repose of his soul in token of their love, respect and gratitude. From communities of sisters from far and wide came letters such as those the reader has just seen. In every instance they promised masses.

Rarely, indeed, has the Catholic press devoted so much space to the death of a priest as in the case of Father McKenna. Every Catholic paper contained a eulogy of the great apostle and the burden of each is the same as that of the appreciation we have just quoted. As the *Catholic News* of March 3, for instance, remarks in its beautiful editorial:

"Mother Church is slow in her process of saint-making, but in the unofficial roster of uncanonized saints Americans will place high the name of the venerable Dominican whom his confrères have titled the Apostle of the Holy Name and Apostle of the Rosary. No wonder that in the crowds pressing about his bier for a last look at the dead Dominican faith prompted thousands to touch with their medals and Rosaries the priest's lifeless hands."

Another striking tribute to the memory of Father McKenna which we shall reproduce here, is an editorial that appeared in the *Monitor* of New Jersey, March 10, 1917, under the caption of "The Passing of a Veteran Missionary." It is evidently from the gifted pen of the *Monitor's* editor, Rev. William P. Cantwell, LL.D., a lifelong friend of the deceased missionary. Not merely has Doctor Cantwell's tribute a

delightful personal touch to it; it presents a charming picture of Father McKenna's deeply religious character and fidelity to rule, as well as of his tireless and ceaseless zeal in the cause of souls.

"There passed away last week, up in the eighties, a wonderful missionary, the Very Rev. Charles McKenna, O.P. Cardinal Gibbons said of the venerable Dominican that he was the greatest missionary the United States has ever produced. Father McKenna was an exact and faithful religious, a model priest and zealous missionary. Those who knew the venerable man intimately—and it was the writer's privilege to know him well—recall with what scrupulous exactness he lived up to the rule of St. Dominic. He wore the white habit of his Order untarnished through the gathering years, until it became for him the robe of glory. We remember him as he seized a broken week of rest down by the soothing waves with relatives who venerated him. He was the first to reach the church and after meditation to say Mass. Later on in the day, his tall form, haloed with the snow of many holy years, was prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament. It was characteristic of Father McKenna that he always brought with him two companions, some youth, generally some Dominican aspirant, whom he sought to form for the sanctuary, and a pious book. He was never sure that he was not going to preach somewhere—and we never had him for the following Sunday. The book always aided him in shaping the sermon which his devout life had long since prepared. Father McKenna was tireless in the pulpit, a true son of the preaching Saint Dominic. There were two devotions which always claimed his special attention and through them he directed many souls in the way of Christian perfection—the Rosary and the Holy Name. He never tired talking of Our Blessed Mother and her Divine Son. They were the constant burden of his heart and tongue.

"Father McKenna was tall and spare and ascetic—some, indeed, might call him gaunt—and his every aspect and movement was serious and dignified as became the sacred truths he taught.

His speech was fervent and vigorous and ripened into an eloquence that was Savonarola-like in its intensity. He was a prophet of God calling the modern days to repentance. Those who heard him preach never forgot him. The life of Father McKenna was an inspiration to the priesthood of America. 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.' He was devoured by a zeal that not even the snows of age could dampen or restrain. His memory remains a benediction to the American Church."

Thus was Father McKenna honored in death as he had been honored in life. This is the more remarkable because the great orator, lecturer, missionary and apostle had been practically dead to the world for two and a half years. He was a striking exception to the rule, "Out of sight, out of mind." The memory of the honor paid his remains as they lay in state at Saint Vincent Ferrer's Convent and Church is one which will long be cherished by Dominicans. More than once on this occasion the writer overheard such remarks as the following from those who came to pay God's holy servant their last respects: "Never was the grand old priest more eloquent in his finest sermons than now, lying here cold and lifeless." "Never could his preaching have been more effective for good." "Did you ever see anything so edifying as these great sorrowing crowds?" "Not in a generation or more will this funeral be forgotten." But may we not add that for generations to come Father McKenna's memory will continue to be treasured throughout the country? The influence of his saintly life will long be felt; the good he accomplished must live after him; the light he cast will not cease to shine; the honor due his name will be recorded in letters of gold on the pages of our American church history. As Judge

Morgan J. O'Brien, in the letter already quoted,[1] justly writes of the celebrated missionary:

". . . He has gone to his reward, leaving a memory that will long live as a benediction. Having reached the fulness of his years, his work done, in the odor of sanctity and in the bosom of the Order of his choice, taking with him the affection and admiration of his associates in religion and bereaved and followed by thousands of grateful and sorrowing people, he has passed from earth to heaven.

"When the history of our times and the Church in the United States is written, it must contain a recital of his manifold deeds and marvelous career. Then, like those who knew him on earth, those of future generations who will study his life and realize what he accomplished, will bless his name and hold him in veneration as a great and holy priest, as a zealous and eloquent missionary, as a true friend of the poor and the sinner, as a devoted religious who consecrated a life of unusual force and capacity to the service of religion and humanity."

[1] See pages 312–314.

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